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THE WORLD OF PRIMITIVE MAN

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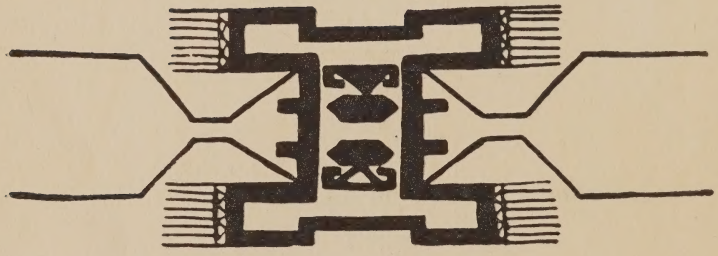

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THE WORLD OF PRIMITIVE MAN

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PREFACE

In the following pages I have attempted to portray the civilizations of primitive peoples and the world in which they lived. If, from my picture, new facets of these civilizations which have hitherto not been stressed or even known seem to emerge, that is due not to any new discoveries on my part, but to the method of approach I have adopted. This, too, is not new. It is the approach of all culture historians and consists primarily in giving a description in terms of positive and rational achievements, not in terms of a nation's failures. These, too, belong to any true picture. Yet, manifestly, no peoples can be understood or properly evaluated by emphasizing too insistently the negative side of their accomplishments. Unfortunately, it is this negative side of primitive man's civilizations that has generally been mainly dwelt upon.

The reasons for this are apparent. The majority of people, scholars and laymen alike, still contend that the history of man is the history of the gradual stages of that triumph of his rational faculties which began significantly with the first appearance of the great civilizations of Egypt, Babylonia, India and China and which reached its crest with the ancient Greeks and Romans and their cultural heirs. Before that, it is asserted, man had essentially led an instinctive life where he was, by and large, a prey to his fears and a slave to his emotions. According to this view, the achievements of the great civilizations were intimately bound up with the social-economic order that arose around 3500 B.C. Without this order, so we are told, the particular type of mentality which permitted objective thinking was impossible and the concept of personality could not possibly have emerged.

Now it is unquestionably a fact that nowhere among aboriginal peoples do we ever encounter such a social-economic order. But is there any justification for assuming that objective thinking and the concept of personality are inextricably bound up with this particular economic order? This is the fundamental question which must be answered, for unless we are clear on this very vital point, no correct picture of the world of primitive man can possibly be obtained. The answer to this question has, in great measure, determined the method of approach adopted in this book.

Only when primitive civilizations are studied in terms of their positive achievements, and the facts I have pointed out in this book are duly recognized, will it be possible to assign the civilizations primitive man devised, their proper place in the history of social evolution and to appreciate the nature of the contribution which aboriginal philosophers and theorists have made to the history of thought.

In my presentation comparatively little is said about magic and magical practices and even less about the role of fear. This does not, of course, mean that I do not take cognizance of the role these play. But that is not the problem. The problem is not whether magic and magical practices exist or how great their number, but rather the extent to which they interfere with the orderly processes of life and the extent to which they hinder or circumscribe rational and objective thinking. The data presented in this book should answer that question conclusively.

In covering so vast a subject there are bound to be over-statements, wrong stresses and subjective interpretations. Of this I am only too well aware. Of one thing, however, the reader can be assured. Wherever I indulge in theories or speculations—and I do so indulge in a number of instances—I specify that fact.

It might be well to point out here my use of certain words and phrases. I employ the words *culture, civilization* and *society* interchangeably and also the phrases *primitive civilization* and *aboriginal civilization* interchangeably.

I would like to call the reader's attention to the fact that I have utilized, always with drastic changes and in a different perspective, certain material previously published in other of my books: *Primitive Man as Philosopher, Primitive Religion, Winnebago Hero Cycles* and *Die religioese Erfahrung der Naturvoelker.*

In conclusion I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Bollingen Foundation and the Wenner Gren Foundation of New York, for their generosity in putting the funds at my disposal which gave me the leisure to complete this work.

PAUL RADIN

Lugano, Switzerland, 1952.

THE WORLD OF PRIMITIVE MAN

PROLOGUE

VIEWED PSYCHOLOGICALLY, IT MIGHT BE CONTENDED THAT the history of civilization is largely the account of the attempts of man to forget his transformation from an animal into a human being. Becoming conscious must assuredly have been a painful and traumatic experience, one to which he offered a most tenacious and continuous resistance. And he was right.

He must have been dimly aware, for a long time, that in his basic organic reactions, he had not, as yet, become sufficiently differentiated from his ape-like ancestors to make it easy for anyone of less than normal sensibilities always to distinguish accurately between the two. The untoward accident that had given him the new,

specifically integrated nervous system we call human and an upright posture brought its full quota of woe and misery to him. With this new nervous equipment he might have hoped for a new outward frame. Nature willed it otherwise and allowed him merely a larger brain and the change from a horizontal to an upright posture. Thus his frame belied that part of his brain which was new. As the contrast and incongruity between the two gradually dawned upon him we can forgive him for becoming fretful and resentful. Problems of the most perplexing kind crowded upon him for which answers had to be found. At the beginning, certainly, there could have been nothing but bewilderment illumined by doubt.

The struggle for existence and the ensuing revelation of his animal-human nature could not have added to his comfort or assuaged his newly acquired fears. To orient himself in this new world, neither of his making nor of his choosing, he began that differentiation between himself and the world outside of him that was eventually to lead to the concept of the supernatural, and of gods. To gain some measure of peace he sought solace, consciously or unconsciously, in dreams and dream-myths. Among the first of these dream-myths, it would seem, was that of a time in the not too distant past where there had been no strife, inward or outward, a Golden Age that would return again in the not too distant future.

The records of all peoples, aboriginal as well as the so-called civilized, attest the early presence of this dream-myth. It dealt with a place where people never grow up and where they rest after the strain of their earthly experience.

Most aboriginal peoples deprived it early of any vital cultural significance. In so far as it persisted at all among them, it persisted in the belief in a future world.

Civilizations beginning with ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia, however, never gave it up. For them, outwardly at least, its main purpose seems to have been to forget reality. Yet reality was too much upon them, a double reality in fact, one psychological and the other social. The first concerned the inward conflict of the animal human-being with the human-animal and the second, the conflict of the human animal with the specific structure of that type of society which had come into existence on the banks of the Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates and the Indus some 6,000 years ago and, somewhat later, in China.

Thus, inwardly and outwardly, man's most pessimistic forebodings about his innate inability to cope with the problems of this world and the unchangeability of human nature seemed to be confirmed. In such an atmosphere, one might have anticipated that the dream-myth of the return of the Golden Age would have been brought closer to the present. Precisely the opposite occurred. The Golden Age was removed even further from living man. On the one hand, it was pushed into the very distant past and, on the other hand, it was transferred to the eternal future, to life after death. Yet these major ancient civilizations never forgot it, nor did they cease speculating upon why it had disappeared and when it would return again.

This displacement of the dream-myth into a hoary past, and its transformation into a beatific life after death, is not to be ascribed simply to the workings of the mythopoeic imagination. So stubborn refusal to forget is not an accident. Nor is it an accident that it received one type of elaboration among the ancient Egyptians, another among the ancient Semites, more particularly the Hebrews, and still another among the ancient Greeks.

It would be a mistake to think that we are dealing here, simply or exclusively, with one aspect of the ever-

recurring struggle of two opposing and basic urges: the one, to return to the unconscious and undifferentiated, the other, to remain in the conscious, the differentiated and individualized, in the world of living men. To disregard this struggle, would unquestionably lead to a distortion of the facts. Yet it would be fatal and profoundly disastrous to forget that this took place in a particular social-economic environment, that, although the elaborations and transformations which the dream-myth of the Golden Age underwent were intimately connected with this unconscious psychical struggle, they were inextricably rooted in and bound up with the political-economic structure of the major civilizations of the ancient world.

From the point of view of the world of nature, human consciousness may be regarded as constituting initially, at least, a type of *hybris*, an act of defiance of the natural order and one which called for frequent atonement. This is, indeed, a conception not infrequently encountered in the myths and reflections of many aboriginal peoples. However the cultural domestication of man necessitated the transformation of this *hybris*, very early, into a positive and creative force. Perhaps this is what is implied in the almost universally known myth of *l'éternel rétour*, the return to the world of men, to the world of differentiated individual and social consciousness.

If many major civilizations consequently stress somewhat obsessively a return, not to the world of men but to the world of the Golden Age or to the world after death, to the world, in short, of the unconscious, an explanation is imperatively demanded. Psychologically it might be contended that, in these instances, the unconscious had partially overwhelmed the conscious and that man's *hybris*, in daring to become human, always called for

atonement. But the history of the ancient Egyptians, of the Sumerian-Babylonians, of the Hebrews, of ancient Indians, the history of Christianity and Mohammedanism, does not bear this out.

The answer must be sought elsewhere. It is to be sought wholly within the realm of the conscious, completely within the world of men. Not the unconscious has here been victorious but a special and directed manipulation of the unconscious, a manipulation which is inherently connected with, and flows inevitably from, the structure of most of the major civilizations that had emerged in northern Africa, Asia and Europe some six to four thousand years ago. To this, until we reach modern times, only Greece formed an exception, and then only for a short time.

One of the fundamental traits of these major civilizations was their essential instability, the frequent social-economic crises through which they passed and the amazing vitality of two somewhat contradictory fictions. The first was to the effect that there had never been any instability or change and the second that stability existed eternally, but in the afterworld not in this. As a corollary to the above, sometimes expressed clearly, at other times, only implied, there existed a third fiction to the effect that life on earth was an insignificant incident, replete with pain and suffering, to be hurried through.

Contrasted with these major civilizations, there have always existed other civilizations, those of aboriginal peoples, where societies were fundamentally stable, where no basic internal social-economic crises occurred, where there was no devaluation of life on earth, where man's most insistent plea was that he be allowed to return to the earth and where the myth of an afterworld was but poorly developed. Instead of life on earth being

regarded as an insignificant incident, in these civilizations just the contrary held true; life in the afterworld was so interpreted.

Here we have an amazing antithesis which it is of fundamental importance to remember if we wish to understand the civilizations of aboriginal peoples and to see them in their proper perspective. The recognition of this antithesis is of basic significance for the light it throws on the correlation between the structure of a given society and the fictions it creates and elaborates and why it creates and elaborates them.

It is in this context that the following analysis and synthesis of primitive cultures is to be read.

part one

THE BASIC STRUCTURES

chapter one

ABORIGINAL CIVILIZATIONS: THEIR NATURE AND DISTRIBUTION

If one were asked to state briefly and succinctly what are the outstanding positive features of aboriginal civilizations, I, for one, would have no hesitation in answering that there are three: the respect for the individual, irrespective of age or sex; the amazing degree of social and political integration achieved by them; and the existence there of a concept of personal security which transcends all governmental forms and all tribal and group interests and conflicts. At first blush this sounds very much like the description of a semi-ideal society. And, indeed, societies which have effectively solved these fundamental problems of social and economic adjustment might well be called semi-perfect.

However, if such an evaluation is to mean anything to us and if it is to carry conviction, we must first examine what problems aboriginal cultures had really solved and determine whether the organization of their life was, on the whole, so simple that the particular problems which afflict us never arose.

Until the anthropological researches of the last two generations it was generally believed by both scholars and laymen that the latter was the case, in other words, that the political, social, and economic life of primitive peoples was of so elementary a kind that conclusions drawn from it had no relevance and significance for the so-called higher civilizations.

We now know that this theory of simplicity is not true. Anthropologists have demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt that there exists an enormous range of variation in the structure of aboriginal societies. Some of them, indeed, are simple. They are comparatively few in number. The vast majority possess in intricate and, often, a subtle and highly elaborate social, economic and political structure, with secondary developments in the arts, literature and music, commanding complete respect. It is difficult to think of any but a very few forms of government known to us whose counterpart is not to be found among them, just as are most of our types of economic organization. True towns, too, are to be encountered among some tribes, laid out according to plans that are not essentially different from those we associate, for instance, with Egypt and Mesopotamia. Nor are these towns always markedly inferior to the former. This applies not simply to the cities of the Mayas, Aztecs and Incas, but to those of the ancient southwest of the United States as well.

How, if all this holds true, are we to explain the startling fact that in no aboriginal civilization did those

basic economic distortions and crises arise that have existed in all the major civilizations since 3000 B.C.? Our best answer is to attempt a description of the specific traits common to the vast majority of aboriginal civilizations and which, I cannot but feel, have been responsible for, or, at least, largely contributory to, the production of this outstanding contrast.

The summary which follows applies primarily to those tribes whose subsistence-economy is fishing-hunting, agriculture or stock-herding. The simple food-collectors are only briefly alluded to. Since the latter form, at best, five per cent of the existing number of distinct tribes and communities and probably less than one per cent of the existing aboriginal population, there is not any great distortion involved in this exclusion.

Let us begin with the economic foundations as we find them from approximately 1600 A.D. to the present time. The overwhelming majority of aboriginal tribes or communities practiced agriculture. Roughly speaking, less than five per cent were primarily food gatherers, approximately fifteen per cent were hunters and fishers and ten per cent pastoral-nomads. The rest were agriculturists. In terms of population the percentage for the non-agriculturists was, of course, much smaller.

In none of these groups did the concept of the individual ownership of property in our sense of the term exist. The general method of exchange was barter. The basic theory upon which an exchange of goods was made can, perhaps, be fairly correctly summed up in the formula: for the object given or traded, an object representing a higher evaluation had to be given in return and so on *ad infinitum*. A medium of exchange was by no means rare but its presence did not effect the basic system of exchange materially. Such a system of exchange meant, on the whole, that the family or some

larger societal unit was generally involved. This, in addition to the limitation imposed by the nature and concept of ownership, prevented trade from ever acquiring in aboriginal civilizations the importance it did in our civilization, past or present.

The political structure was somewhat more variable. On a conservative estimate, seventy per cent of all agricultural communities possessed a clan, and probably many agricultural communities who do not have it today, once possessed it. It is also found among quite a number of fishing and hunting groups. I am using the term clan to mean, ideally, units within the tribe between whose members marriage is forbidden, who regard themselves as bound together by special blood ties generally symbolized by the claim of being descended from a common ancestor, who reckon descent either in the unit of the mother or father and in which there exists a unique and special classification of relatives. Among many of these tribes there also exists a grouping of clans into two larger units, the so-called dual organization.

The legal structure is not so easy to epitomize. Everywhere communities were governed by fixed rules and observances enforced by a public opinion variously organized and delegated. This delegation of authority varied from the loosest kind of chieftainship to an inheritable kingship. In no case, however, was there anything even remotely approaching the absolute and personal despotism which existed at one time or another among the major civilizations of Western Europe, the Mediterranean and Asia.

Although definitely institutionalized social stratifications were by no means uncommon, they differed fundamentally from our own. Among other things, they were definitely limited in most of the places where they occurred by a number of factors. The most important of

these were the clan organization and its implications, particularly the basic equality of men and women; the concept of property; the nature of the organization of authority as well as the nature of its authentication; and, lastly and most vitally, by the theory of what constituted the irreducible minimum to which man was entitled. This theory it is fundamental to remember. According to it, every individual possessed an inalienable right to food, shelter and clothing. To deny anyone this irreducible minimum was equivalent to saying that a man no longer existed, that he was dead.

Institutionalized social stratifications were present in none of the pastoral-nomad tribes, in only a negligible number of the hunter-fishing communities and in approximately one-fifth of the agricultural tribes.

Of the technological level little need be said. With the exception of the utilization of water-power, of special utilization of wind-power, of any wide-spread and significant use of metals, and of certain war-implements like catapults, etc., it was, in many ways, as high as that which prevailed among the overwhelming majority of the populations of the ancient and even the early medieval civilizations of Western Europe.

Writing, apart from the use of mnemonic devices, except, of course, among the Mayas and the ancient Mexicans, was unknown. This is a fact of great significance not only for literature but for the whole question of the authentication of authority, civil and religious.

As to the role of magic and religion, little need be said here except to emphasize their function in validating the realities of everyday life.

Institutionalized religion in our sense of the term did not exist. There was, consequently, no tendency for it to develop into an official religion with authority of its own, and with the right to demand the acceptance of

certain beliefs and precepts on the threat of punishment to the disbeliever. Similarly, religion made no attempt, as such, to validate the civil authority. Thus, one of its major functions in our own civilizations, ancient and modern, was absent.

There are few portions of the world where aboriginal peoples are not to be encountered today or where, at least, they did not exist when the Americas were discovered. The one exception is Europe and the Mediterranean Basin and a large portion of Asia. Apart from the two Americas, Australia and Tasmania, a few of the islands of Indonesia and, probably, most of Oceania, all had, in varying degrees and at different periods, been in contact with those great foci of civilization which were established approximately 6000 years ago along the Nile, the Tigris-Euphrates and the Indus rivers. Certain sections of what we customarily designate as aboriginal Africa have been basically transformed by Egyptian, Persian, Greek, Carthaginian, Roman and Arabic-Mohammedan invasions, to speak only of the major ones. The aboriginal groups in India and South Asia in general, as well as those in Indonesia, have been subjected successively to far-reaching Hindu, Buddhist and Mohammedan influences. Early Chinese and, later on, Persian-Greek influences spread over large areas of central and even northern Asia. Nor were these contacts always of a minor and superficial type. They were often extensive and were at times accompanied either by actual military conquests or by economic and cultural domination.

But even those aboriginal groups that were not profoundly affected by irradiations from the cultural foci just mentioned cannot all be thrown together into a miscellaneous group whose main characteristic it was to

have developed in comparative freedom from the rest of the world. The great revolution which accompanied the invention of agriculture, of domesticated plants and of animals, and that introduced pottery and weaving, although it occurred in a restricted section of the Mediterranean Basin and Asia, spread from this area over practically all of aboriginal Africa and Asia. Its secondary waves reached Indonesia and Oceania. There is some reason for believing that this new civilization spread over considerable portions of aboriginal Africa at a very early date, possibly only a few millenia after its first appearance, 7000 years ago. There are ample indications that it did not reach Indonesia much before 1000 B.C. and most of Oceania a thousand or more years later. In fact, for Micronesia and Polynesia it seems doubtful whether some date between 600 and 800 A.D. is not early enough. Clearly, under these conditions, when it was finally brought to Indonesia and Oceania there must have been many contaminations with much later cultural developments.

So completely did this agricultural civilization of approximately 6000 B.C. and its later secondary developments eventually conquer the old world that it was only on its marginal areas in northeastern and southeastern Asia and in islands like Australia and Tasmania that non-agricultural civilizations were encountered.

If, in addition to what we have just mentioned, we also bear in mind the continual shiftings of population that have been occurring in native Africa, Asia and in the vast stretches of the South Seas from the East Indies to eastern Polynesia, then we obtain some measure of the impingements, friendly and unfriendly, to which these peoples were subjected. In no sense can it be said that they were isolated either from one another or from the civilizations and peoples geographically far re-

moved. In aboriginal Africa we have a situation of particular complexity due to this continual shifting of populations and the spread of influences from the "higher" civilizations of the eastern Mediterranean. Indeed, it is with many provisos that they should be termed aboriginal, certain parts of South Africa always excepted.

The situation is quite different in the New World. At least, until recently it seemed to have been so. Although there, too, civilizations based on agriculture predominate, this predominance is not remotely as great as it is in the Old World. In addition, the type of agriculture developed, the nature of its implications and the manner in which it spread were quite distinct.

From the point of view of the general history of human culture it is well to bear these facts in mind. Most students who wish to obtain a picture of aboriginal civilizations on their supposedly simpler political-economic levels, apart, of course, from Australia and a few scattered tribes in southeastern and northeastern Asia, rely upon the data from the Americas and it is for this reason primarily that I have felt it justified to give this data so much prominence.

That agriculture developed independently of the Old World in the Americas seems fairly clear. When it developed we do not know. We may hazard the guess, however, that 3000 B.C., at the outside, is the earliest date we need assign to it.

At what time the American Indians first reached America, this, too, is a much debated question. No one, I believe, would give a date much before 15,000-20,000 B.C. For our purposes the question is of interest only as regards the nature of the civilization these immigrants brought with them from Asia. Granting, as we must, that they came here in discontinuous waves and assuming, as I also think we must, that the last inva-

sion was the one which brought the Athapascan-speaking peoples to America probably not much more than two thousand years ago, we do not have to postulate for any of these immigrants any economy more complex than that based on hunting and fishing.

We can now turn to the more specific analysis of the cultures themselves. It will, necessarily, have to be of a summary character. This is, of course, always dangerous. It is obviously impossible for an outsider belonging to a civilization so different from those here described not to be subjective. I am well aware of this fact. I have tried to guard against the dangers inherent in this inescapable subjectivity to the best of my ability and to make the description of primitive cultures one which would meet with the general approval of the peoples involved. That is, I must insist, far more vital than to have it meet with the general approval of anthropologists or anthropological theorists.

chapter two

THE LIMITING CONDITIONS

ANY SOCIETY WHICH HAS DEVELOPED NO VALUE FOR THE acquisition of surplus goods, and no adequate techniques for taking care of such a surplus when it does possess one, is inevitably bound to be influenced by the physical environment in a very direct and fundamental manner. However, this does not, in any sense, imply the complete or exclusive dependence of a people upon the resources of a particular environment. It would be utterly impossible to account for the different ways in which various tribes have utilized a favorable natural environment, if that were the case. As has been pointed out repeatedly, a severe and difficult region like that in which the Eskimos live may be the scene of a technically elaborate culture and a favorable region like that

in which the extinct Tasmanians lived, or a well-watered one like that inhabited by the natives of southeastern Australia, may be the scene of the simplest of cultures.

The limiting and intimate relationship between a group and the physical environment lies largely, however, in an entirely different direction, namely in the element of the risk inherent in this relationship. This expresses itself in numerous ways, outwardly and inwardly. Its recognition is basic to an understanding of the whole question of the size and density of the population. To attribute the sparcity of the population, for instance, simply to the influence of the size of the area in which people live or to geographical or climatic characteristics is quite misleading.

What is involved is something of far deeper significance, namely, the consciousness of an inadequacy in the interrelationship between man and the outside world upon which he is dependent. This awareness of the risks that are present colors primitive man's conception of the nature of his activities and of his obligations to the community. It holds for all aboriginal peoples whether they are living on the economic level of simple food-gatherers or of highly differentiated agriculturists. Thus it becomes a deterrent, consciously or unconsciously, to the development of those factors making for greater security, such as stability of habitat and the accumulation of wealth, in our sense of the term. Wherever the latter two are found the population increases and, with it and the ensuing increase in the density of population, there are produced the conditions necessary for the specific elaborations of the concept of authority, the types of authority and the development of those social and political institutions so characteristic of the major civilizations of Africa, Asia and the Mediterranean which arose some six thousand years ago.

Only if we remember the consciousness of this persistent element of risk, only if we remember it concretely in terms, for instance, of a decade, and only if we bear in mind that primitive man often lives very close to the starvation level, can we hope to understand and appreciate the nature of the cultural integration he has achieved.

How to make his food supply secure is the core around which this integration has been built up. It is, thus, the function of risk to give to the quest of the food supply its heightened interest and to furnish the active incentive for the complete subordination of all the societal constructs, social, political, ideological, to the attainment of this one end. If, consequently, it is contended that the primary function of magic and religion is to validate the realities of everyday life, this does not imply that this function inheres in magic and religion as such. It means simply that risk and starvation are ever-present in the minds of men.

It would be quite erroneous to imagine that this sense of risk or of the ever-imminent possibility of starvation is unique, that it is characteristic of aboriginal peoples alone. Both have been ever-present in the minds and hearts of the vast majority of individuals in the historic civilizations since the fourth millenium B.C. and they exist in a far more acute and poignant form among the latter than they ever did among aboriginal peoples. And, be it remembered that it is definitely around the food supply that these fears cluster, both in civilized as well as in aboriginal societies.

Yet the difference between the two is clear and fundamental. In aboriginal societies, in case of famine or disaster, the whole community without exception suffers and it is patent to all that the physical environment has failed. In our own society the situation is quite different.

There, a special group exists which generally does not suffer except to a minimal degree and it is often clearly patent that the physical environment could have been prevented from failing as signally as it did. The reaction of individuals and of the group is, in each case, characteristically distinct. In the first, suffering and helplessness are a part of a total situation. The whole group as a positive cohesive unit is involved. In consequence, there is generally no disorganization or disintegration either of individuals or of the group as such. In the second instance, as I assuredly do not have to point out, it is, of course, just the opposite.

The physical environment, it can therefore be said, is basically a limiting condition only to the extent to which the particular economic organization and the technological achievement of the tribe permits it to be one. It goes without saying, of course, that areas exist where it is practically impossible to obtain even a minimal subsistence. But, obviously, no people will stay in such a region for any length of time except under rare and exceedingly unusual conditions.

Of far greater significance than the physical environment as a limiting factor in the development of aboriginal civilizations is the size and density of the population. These not only effectively inhibit the formation of social units and social ties other than those implied in the structure of a simple family but they tend, at times, even to break up this structure. It should be remembered that in a small independent community, say of five to ten families, i.e., twenty to forty persons, there are, first, not enough individuals to form a group that can effectively function as a corporate unit and, secondly, in such small groups, personal interests are prone to predominate to an obsessive degree.

To these two negative factors must be added a third.

In any normal distribution of temperament and ability, the probability of many individuals of unusual ability being born in so small a community is extremely small. Thus, the value that might otherwise possibly accrue to a group from the presence and functioning of persons more sensitively organized than the average man will be lost.

If, then, such bands—they can hardly be called tribes—appear to us culturally impoverished, this impression is essentially correct. No elements are present in this situation to make for organization—neither the physical environment to be exploited, the nature of the dependence of the individual upon this environment, nor the nature of the relation of one individual to another. Groups of this type are fairly uncommon today, but they were commoner in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries A.D., when most aboriginal peoples first came into intimate contact with Europeans, and must have represented the normal type of societal structure in the paleolithic period.

The moment we deal with larger independent groups, that is, with units consisting say of twenty families or more, the size and density of a population no longer represents a seriously limiting condition. There will then exist a sufficiently large number of individuals to establish a full societal consciousness. This can only exist where there is a corporate unit not in danger of being continually disrupted by the play of purely personal interests. There will then exist also a reasonably effective organization of the physical environment to be exploited, techniques for exploiting it and, finally, a normalizing, and often an institutionalizing, of human interrelationships.

Bearing this in mind, we can now put the two questions which have first to be answered if we wish to

properly understand primitive society. They are, first, does any correlation exist between certain types of economy and certain societal forms and large populations and, secondly, what factors have led to the apparent fixing of an upper limit for the size of a population? We shall arbitrarily call any tribal unit with more than approximately one thousand people large. The first question can be categorically answered in the negative as far as concerns political-societal forms but not as concerns types of economy, for there exists no agricultural community with a small population.

The second question is not so easy to answer. It certainly is not true that a favorable environment plus a well-developed agricultural economy will lead to a steady increase in population. Aboriginal America north of the Rio Grande had, at best, a million people at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Of these, approximately three-fifths practiced agriculture and lived under exceedingly favorable conditions. These areas could, we can safely state, have supported three million people as easily as six hundred thousand. That they did not support so large a population was largely due to the structure of aboriginal American civilizations where the concept of human labor as a commodity did not develop. In Mexico and Peru, among the Aztecs and Incas where such a concept did, to a certain extent, exist there was a tremendous increase in population.

While we must then ascribe part of this increase to the influence of the settled conditions associated with technological advance and city life, the real stimulus came from the fact that an increase in population served the specific interests of special ruling groups. It was not, therefore, simply because of its importance in technological advance that an increase was desirable. It was equally important in connection with the mainte-

nance and extension of the power of a ruling group, particularly where approximations to authoritarian state-systems prevailed. We must, consequently, not be surprised to find that the growth of population has been encouraged most persistently and unscrupulously by such authoritarian states, from the days of Egypt and Mesopotamia to those of Mussolini and Hitler.

Apart from the influence of the methods of production and the productive relations, of systems of exchange and the size of the population, it has frequently been contended that the attitude of primitive peoples toward the world in general, their magical and religious beliefs, their whole method of thought, constituted a definitely limiting condition upon the types and development of societal, economic, and technological forms. Of the legitimacy of such an interpretation for technology, we shall speak presently. Here a few remarks on its application to the economic and social-political structure of aboriginal society may be in place.

That magic and religion, for instance, permeated every aspect of primitive man's life we know. The question we have to answer, however, is not this, but whether these acted as deterrents to the development of certain types of social-political growth or economic elaborations. Many scholars believe they have. Veblen expressed the view of practically all sociologists and the majority of anthropologists, theoretical and practical, when he stated that,

> "Addiction to magical, superstitious or religious conceptions will necessarily have its effect on the conceptions and logic employed in technological theory and practice, and will impair its efficiency by that much . . . In many or all of these naïve and early developments of authority, and perhaps in those cultures where the control takes this

> inchoate form of a customary 'gerontocracy,' its immediate effect is that an *abiding sense of authenticity* comes to pervade the routine of daily life, such as effectually to obstruct all innovations, whether in the ways and means of work or in the conduct of life more at large." [1]

A more detailed and realistic study of the nature and importance of what Veblen so felicitously designates as "contaminatious" has definitely disproved such an interpretation. It has become increasingly evident that we must distinguish carefully between the theories and constructions of native medicine-men and priests, concerning the significance of the magical and religious practices, and the beliefs and attitudes of the average man. In numerous cases, these theories and constructions of the medicine-men turn out to be largely in the nature of essentially functionless embellishments and envelopes. While in special instances, they may lead to personal inconveniences and discomforts and to minor distortions of the societal framework, they never seriously disturb the effective functioning of a society. A few examples will bring this point home very clearly.

Among the Eskimo, taboo plays an all-determining role. There are taboos for practically everything. One of the most important is that in connection with the contaminating influences of a dead body upon any object in its vicinity. If an old man were to die in a house containing food, theoretically the food would have to be destroyed even if it were midwinter and even if its destruction entail starvation for a large number of individuals. Yet no instances of this ever having happened are recorded. Whenever there is the slightest threat of such a contingency occurring immediate measures are

[1] T. Veblen, *The Instinct of Workmanship* (New York, 1914), pp. 41-42. The italics are mine.

taken to prevent it. If it conceivably did actually happen the fact would be hushed up.

Similarly, among the Indians of the Great Lakes many magical practices are performed for killing game animals. For instance, an arrow dipped in poison is discharged along a bear-trail the night before the hunt is to take place. But it is not any trail that is selected or at any time of the year, but a particular trail at a particular time of the year when it is specifically known, from numerous indications, that bears are present. The average Indian would laugh at the suggestion that the discharge of an arrow into a trail at a time when everyone knew there were no bears in the vicinity would be of any avail.[2]

We should always remember that, at best, only a small number of individuals take at their face value the magical and religious trappings in which everyday life is shrouded, or are confused by them. For aboriginal men, the validity and authenticity of the outside and inward worlds are established by sensory and pragmatic tests. If we bear this in mind, then it will be seen how erroneous is such a conception of Veblen's—one to which many sociologists and ethnologists still subscribe—as the following:

> "The peculiar advantage of tillage and cattle-breeding over the primary mechanic arts, that by which the former arts gained and kept their lead," so he tells us, "seems to have been the simple circumstance that the propensity of workmanlike men to impute a workmanlike (teleological) nature to phenomena does not leave the resulting

[2] This view is also corroborated by R. Thurnwald, *Economics in Primitive Communities* (Oxford, 1932), p. 116. "It is not usual, in everyday work, to pay so much attention to these transcendental (i.e. influence of supernatural powers) relations."

> knowledge of these phenomena so wide of the mark in the case of animate nature as in that of brute matter. It will probably not do to say that the anthropomorphic imputation has been directly serviceable to the technological end in the case of tillage and cattle-breeding; it is rather that the disadvantage or disserviceability of such an interpretation of facts has been greater in the mechanic arts in early times." [3]

It is not implied here, of course, that many sociologists or anthropologists would subscribe to the correctness of this particular example but rather to the implications behind it.

As will become evident later on, Veblen is quite wrong in his belief that the anthropomorphic imputation is not directly serviceable to the technological end. Indeed, quite the contrary is true.

We come now to the last of the supposedly limiting conditions, the relation between the degree of technological progress made and the political, economic, and social level attained. Here, sociologists and social theorists in general have indulged in exceedingly loose and unjustifiable generalizations. The German sociologist and ethnologist, Thurnwald, may be taken as a typical representative and I shall, accordingly, quote his views at considerable length.

> "In many cases," so he tells us, "it was the possession of superior weapons, and, above all, of superior technical knowledge and skill which placed one ethnical group permanently in a position of superiority to another. This position was reenforced by the idea that mystic magical powers were responsible for greater intelligence and

[3] *Op. cit.*, pp. 79-80.

skill." [4] "While mental forms," he adds, "appear to be constantly in a state of flux, material formations are much more rigid. Under favorable circumstances the same shapes are retained for thousands of years, as in certain cases, for example, in Egypt and the Sudan." [5]

Hand in hand with this interpretation has gone the idea that, in contradistinction to myths or social institutions, material objects remain unchanged and rigid.[6]

In view of these two statements, it is not strange to find Thurnwald proceeding one step further and insisting that hunting tribes find it extraordinarily difficult to pass over to another cultural horizon like pastoral life or tillage and that pastoral peoples have a dread of agriculturists. To quote Thurnwald again:

> "We can only expect new technical methods of obtaining food to be adopted by a tribe with the same cultural horizon as the innovators. The adoption of food techniques alien to the system must be preceded by profound social dislocations." [7]
>
> In another passage he states that, "the full developement of technique is due not only to discoveries but also to changes which make their appearance during migrations, owing to the necessity of adaptation to new local surroundings. The institutions and arts of alien tribes, more especially, are gained through women or prisoners of war, but often considerably altered in the process, so as to suit the cultural system of the adapters." [8]

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[4] Thurnwald, *op. cit.*, p. 35.
[5] Ibid., p. 45.
[6] Ibid., p. 45.
[7] Thurnwald, *op. cit.*, p. 38.
[8] Ibid., p. 36.

It would be a comparatively simple task to give example after example refuting the notion that there ever existed any antagonistic attitude between cultures on different economic levels. A few from America must suffice. The Navajo, originally simple nomadic hunters, adopted a pastoral life without any difficulties shortly after their first contact with the Spaniards; the Central Algonquin passed easily from a hunting economy to an agricultural one, and the food-gathering Yuman tribes of the Lower Colorado took over agriculture eagerly and without any indication of antagonism or fear. Conversely, the eastern Dakota and the Cheyenne abandoned agriculture and adopted hunting without any traces of mystical terror. The archeological evidence for North America where such changes occurred repeatedly indicates clearly that there was no violent displacement of one economy by another.

As far as changes of technique taking place invariably or even regularly as the result of migrations, this, too, can be easily refuted. The same holds true for any change of political structure necessarily following a change of methods of food-production. The eastern Dakota gave up their clan organization during their wanderings across the Plains; the fairly closely-related Crow did not, nor did the Mandan.

Outside of America the Maori are an interesting case in point. When they reached New Zealand physical conditions forced them to reorganize their food economy substantially. The southern group was, in fact, forced to abandon agriculture and to revert to a type of "food-gathering." Yet, apart from some modifications in the crafts they had brought with them and some minor changes in social organization, the structure of their society remained unaltered.

Manifestly, it is not along these lines that material

objects and the techniques connected with their manufacture exerted any constraining influence. Where, then, are we to seek for it? Can we discover anything about the technological knowledge primitive peoples possessed, their methods of workmanship or the magical and religious contaminations connected with them which might have acted as a deterrent to invention and progress or prevented the full and complete utilization of materials?

Most writers on the subject have, like Thurnwald, emphasized the conservation shown in the essential form of material objects and contrasted it with what they felt to be the fluidity in form exhibited in rituals and myths, for instance. But, on closer inspection, this contrast, too, proves to be an illusion due, primarily, to the investigator's lack of understanding of what, in the eyes of the natives, constitutes the essential and basic form for a particular ritual and myth. Actually, a greater degree of variability and change is permitted for the former than for the latter. That is but natural, for it is not the specific type or form of a tool or the specific nature of a technique which is of importance but the efficiency with which tools accomplish their purpose. Indeed, on no other assumption would it be possible to explain the ease with which tools, implements and techniques pass from group to group or the speed with which European objects were taken over and incorporated into aboriginal cultures. All investigators who have spent any length of time with primitive peoples can amply testify to this fact.

Our problem thus becomes fairly simple. It narrows down to the question of why, if change in the form of objects is countenanced, and if purely practical considerations govern the manufacture of objects, certain obvious inventions were never made, for instance, the sail and the wheel? Why were dwellings and boats often so in-

adequate for the purposes for which they were to be put, and why were they frequently so impermanent? To a certain extent the answer does lie in the fact that the tools and the technical knowledge and methods of workmanship were frequently not adequate. After the arrival of the French in Canada, for instance, tribes that before had been content with but a few dug-out canoes, because the time consumed in burning out a tree stump was hardly justified by the use to which such dug-outs were put, increased their number a hundred-fold. With European tools they could be made quickly and their durable quality then gave them a distinct superiority over birch-bark canoes. In the same way, the older cooking utensils, many articles of clothing, house-types, traps and war weapons, to mention only the more important articles, were either abandoned or completely remodeled in the interests of greater efficiency and durability. The physical environment certainly had nothing to do, in most cases, either with the inefficiency of the tools or the lack of durability of the materials used, for often the means for making the tools more efficient were at hand, as were the more durable materials.

However, even in such cases, and their number was not very large, other factors of a social, political and an historical order must be included to properly account for this retardation. In short, the apparent technological inadequacies alone have only partial significance. Taken by themselves, and apart from their relationship to the whole dynamic structure of society, they not only explain nothing but they are apt to distort all the problems which arise, where, indeed, they do not create new and fictitious ones. This is nowhere better illustrated than in connection with the various discussions by anthropologists and anthropological theorists of the influence of magic and religion upon all aspects of technology

—the form and function of tools, their numbers, the methods of workmanship and the nature and volume of the technological knowledge.

The broad aspects of this question have already been touched upon. Thurnwald, and we can again take him as representing the attitude of most of the anthropologists who have given this question any thought, contends, for instance,

> "that the richer and more manifold the technique in its preliminary stages, the greater the disposition, on the part of minds groping in all directions for guidance to success, to accept the possibility of such magical intervention. *This means the tentative establishment of (in our opinion) non-essential conditions* for the accomplishment of success." [9]

By non-essential, of course, he means non-rational from the point of view of modern science. Of course, this does not necessarily mean non-intelligent or really magical, for that matter, as Thurnwald and other investigators would seem to imply.

But, though it is quite impossible to accept Thurnwald's interpretation of the meaning and function of the magical wrappings in which techniques may be enveloped, it is quite clear that these do definitely enhance the conditions making for success. Yet success does not primarily depend upon them. The various magical and religious accompaniments and adhesions are really in the nature of decorative rules. They are insignia of success. Moreover, the extent and nature of the "contamination" of technology by magic and religion depend largely upon the social-economic structure of a given society and the

[9] *Op. cit.*, p. 70. The italics are mine.

nature and type of its historical development. In general it may be said that the more inadequate the technology, the fewer and looser will be the magical adhesions and that, on the other hand, the more adequate the technology, the more numerous and firmer will these adhesions become; a fact that has often sorely puzzled anthropological theorists or should have puzzled them. Yet, the answer, I feel, is comparatively simple. It has nothing to do with a more intense or more widespread belief in the intervention of supernatural powers or with any lack of appreciation of the differences between magical and practical means. It is, on the contrary, largely an expression of the greater political-economic power possessed either by the medicinemen and priests, by the chiefs, by a specially-privileged class or by particular cult-societies. Herein, also, lies the explanation of the fact that the negative aspects of magic, i.e., the taboos and prohibitions, are also found most luxuriantly developed where these last-named conditions exist.

The really fundamental point we must remember here is that magic and religion interpenetrate technology most markedly where societies are definitely stratified, as, for instance, in Polynesia and in West and East Africa. If, among primitive peoples, magic and religion have unfavorably affected the development of technology in general or methods of workmanship in particular, it is among these civilizations that we must search for the evidence. What we find does, indeed, show that magical and religious regulations have, to a certain extent, circumscribed the use of certain objects and techniques for particular individuals. However, not the actual beliefs have produced this limitation but their utilization by a special group. The obverse, however, is also true. This limitation of techniques, and the manufacture of certain objects for the benefit of particular groups, led to the de-

velopment of professional "guilds" and, secondarily, to a stimulation of inventiveness.

Thus, it should be quite evident that magical and religious beliefs and regulations have, as such, had no perceptible influence in retarding the advance of technology and have in no way frustrated inventiveness. On the contrary, their influence has been in the direction of making tools and techniques serve more efficiently the purpose for which they were designed. Only one conclusion can be drawn from these facts, namely, that the primary objective of tools and techniques among aboriginal peoples was to guarantee the immediate necessities of the group—food, shelter, and clothing. Since the number of people in any given settlement was never very large, this, under ordinary conditions, was comparatively easy to accomplish and there was, thus, no incentive for improving techniques beyond a definitely circumscribed range. Let us, at least, phrase it this way tentatively.

And, thus, we find ourselves squarely in the midst of all the basic problems connected with the evolution of civilization in general and of primitive cultures in particular. We shall not attempt to answer them directly but, instead, let the data presented in this book furnish the means for answering them.

chapter three

PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES: THE MAN OF ACTION AND THE THINKER

No valid description of primitive societies can be given unless we recognize that, in addition to limiting conditions discussed in Chapter II and the social-economic and political conditioning to be discussed in subsequent chapters, there also exists a psychological conditioning, comparable to one found among ourselves, into two general types of temperament: the man of action and the thinker. It is conceivable that we are here dealing with basic and inherent attributes of the human psyche. We must not, of course, think of these two types as mutually exclusive nor should we forget that the manner in which they are allowed to function in any given society is, in the last analysis, determined

largely by the social-economic structures which have been evolved.

With this fundamental division into two contrasting types of temperament we must then begin. As among ourselves, the man of action predominates overwhelmingly. This predomination carries with it a far greater significance among aboriginal peoples than among us for the very simple reason that the population in any specific group is small. Barring some of the African tribes and the ancient civilizations of Mexico, Central America and Peru, it is and was exceedingly rare to have any tribe numbering more than 10,000. Assuming the same type of distribution of temperament and ability for them that holds for us, for which there is ample justification, we cannot expect a large percentage of thinkers.

Let me now, however, proceed to describe more accurately what I understand by these types. The man of action, broadly characterized, is oriented toward the object. He is interested primarily in practical results and indifferent to the claims and stirrings of his inner self. He unquestionably recognizes them, but he dismisses them shortly and grants them, basically, no validity either in influencing or explaining his actions. The thinker, on the other hand, although he, too, is definitely desirous of practical results—and for specific cultural reasons this holds to a far more marked extent among primitive people than among us—is nevertheless impelled by his whole nature to spend a considerable time in analyzing his subjective states. He attaches great importance both to their influence upon his actions and to the explanations he has developed.

The man of action is satisfied that the world exists and that things happen. To him explanations are of secondary importance. At bottom, it is a matter of utter indifference. Yet he does evince a predilection for one

type of explanation as opposed to another. He clearly prefers, for instance, an explanation in which the purely mechanical, non-causal relation between a series of events is specifically stressed. His mental rhythm—if I may be permitted to use this term—is characterized by a demand for endless repetition of the same event or, at best, of events all of which are on the same general level. Change for him means essentially some abrupt transformation. Monotony holds no terrors for him. Among primitive people his mentality is indelibly expressed in the vast majority of folktales, proper and magical incantations. Indeed, it is because of its great prominence in folktales and incantations that many observers have, not altogether unjustly, regarded his mental rhythm as the characteristic feature of aboriginal cultures.

The rhythm of the thinker is quite different. The postulation of a mechanical relation between events does not suffice. He insists on a description couched either in terms of a gradual progress and evolution from one to many, from simple to complex, or in terms of the postulation of a cause and effect relation. In other words, some type of coordination is imperatively demanded.

To illustrate the two types of rhythm I shall select portions of two Wisconsin Winnebago folk-narratives, the first representing that of the man of action and the other that of the thinker. The first runs as follows:

> Once a man named Holy One lived together with his younger brother. One day he said to him, "Younger brother, you need never fear anything for I am the only holy being in existence and I am very powerful here on earth."
>
> Shortly after he said this all the spirits in the world held a council to determine what was to be done with the one who dared make such a claim. It was decided that he was to be punished and

that the waterspirits were to mete out the punishment. Holy One knew nothing about their decision or how it was to be carried out.

One day his younger brother did not return home. Holy One waited and waited but he did not appear. So he went in search of him. During the search he wept and wherever he stopped to weep a lake was formed from his tears. Whenever he sobbed the hills tumbled down and became valleys.

In his search he came across the wolf. Said he to the wolf, "Little brother, do you happen to know anything about my brother who is lost?" The wolf answered, "Brother, I have heard nothing about him although I travel all over the earth." "Ah well, ah well," said Holy One and started to walk away. Then the wolf said, "Holy One, it is not my business to look after your brother." "Oh," said Holy One, "that is it, is it?" and he raced after him. He soon overtook him, broke open his jaws with his bow and killed him saying, "I suppose you, too, took part in the conspiracy against me." Then he hung him on a tree and walked on.

As he walked along he came across the fox and addressed him as follows: "Little brother, I feel that something has befallen my brother. Now you are a cunning fellow, perhaps you know something of his whereabouts." And the fox replied, "Brother, I go all over the earth but I have not heard anything about your brother." Then Holy One started to walk away, but just then the fox said, "Holy One, I am not supposed to be guardian of your brother!" and ran away. "Ah, so that is it, is it?" said Holy One. "I suppose you, too, are one of those who conspired against me." Then he ran after him and, although the fox ran with all his speed he overtook him, broke his jaws open

and killed him. Then he hung his body on a tree.

Thus he went on encountering one animal after another. The next one he met was the raven and he addressed him as follows: "Little brother, you are a cunning fellow. I feel that something has happened to my brother." "Brother," answered the raven, "I roam all over the earth and the heavens but yet I have not seen your brother." Then as Holy One was about to start the raven said, "Holy One, I am not supposed to look after your brother." "Ah," said Holy One, "you little rascal, I suppose even such as you were present at the conspiracy against me," and he knocked him down just as he was about to fly. He pulled open his jaws and hung him on a tree.

In this narrative we have all the traits mentioned previously as distinctive of the psychic rhythm of the man of action, the endless repetition of events of the same general level, the same questions, the same answers, the same procedure. The only concept of progress dealt with is that of transformation: dry land becomes water, hills become valleys. Compare this with the following origin myth of one of the Winnebago clans and we immediately realize that we are in the presence of an entirely different type of mentality:

In the beginning Earthmaker was sitting in space. When he came to consciousness nothing existed anywhere. He began to think of what he should do and finally he began to cry. Tears flowed from his eyes and fell below him. After a while he looked below him and saw something bright. The bright object below represented his tears. As they fell they had formed the present waters. When the tears flowed below they became the seas as we know them today.

Earthmaker began to think again. He thought

"It will be thus: If I wish anything it will become as I wish it, just as my tears have become seas." So he wished for light and it became light. Then he said, "It is as I thought. The things that I wished for have come into existence just as I desired." Then again he thought and wished for the earth to come into existence and it came into existence. He looked at the earth and liked it. It was not quiet, however. It moved about as do the waters of the sea. Then he created the trees to hold it in place but even they did not cause it to become quiet. Then he created rocks and stones but still the earth kept on spinning. It had, however, almost become quiet. Then he made the four directions and the four winds at the four corners of the earth. He placed them to function as great and powerful beings, to act as island-weights. Yet still the earth was not quiet. Finally he made four large beings and threw them down so that they pierced the earth, their heads protruding at the east. They were snakes. Then the earth became very still and quiet. He looked at the earth he had created and liked it.

Once again he thought to himself that things came into being just as he desired. Now for the first time he really began to talk and he said, "Since everything comes into existence according to my wishes I shall make a being in my own likeness." Thereupon he took a piece of clay and made it like himself. Then he talked to what he had created but it did not answer. So he looked at it attentively and saw that it had no mind. Then he gave it a mind. Again he talked to it but it did not answer. So he looked at it attentively and saw that it had no tongue. Then he gave it a tongue. Thereupon he spoke to it but still it did not answer. He looked at it and saw that it had no soul. So he gave it a soul. Thereupon he talked

> to it again and it almost said something. But it could not make itself intelligible. So Earthmaker breathed into its mouth, talked to it and it answered.

Here we obviously have the expression of a temperament craving for a logical coordination and integration of events. The creation of the earth is pictured as a physical accident. Once in existence, however, the deity infers that it came into being through his thought. Thereupon he begins to create everything else. For the thinker, in short, explanation there must be, explanation in terms of a gradual evolution or progression. In the case of the shaping of our present world, it is in terms of the evolution from motion to rest, from instability to stability and fixity. In the case of the development of human consciousness, it is in terms of the specific endowment of newly created man. First he is given a mind, then the mechanism for speech, a soul, and, finally, intelligence.

How very far the thinker among primitive people can push this urge toward analysis and synthesis is reflected in the following remarkable poem of the Maori of New Zealand. It is an account of the creation of life:

> "Seeking, earnestly seeking in the gloom. Searching—yes, on the coast line—on the bounds of night and day; looking into the night. Night had conceived the seed of night. The heart, the foundation of night, had stood forth self-existing even in the gloom. It grows in gloom—the sap and succulent parts, the life pulsating, and the cup of life. The shadows screen the faintest ray of light. Then came the procreative power, the ecstasy of life first known, and joy of issuing forth from silence into sound. Thus the progeny of the Great-Extending filled the heaven's ex-

panse; the chorus of life rose and swelled into ecstasy, then rested in bliss of calm and quiet."[1]

The same contrast in viewpoint between the man of action and the thinker is visible in the domain of religious beliefs. There we find the thought of the former concrete and unintegrated, that of the latter coordinated, unified and, at times, abstract. Among the Winnebago the sun is regarded by the man of action as composed of a number of separate entities—the disk, the heat, the rays, the corona. For the thinker, on the other hand, these are all aspects of one and the same thing. Similarly, in the same tribe, the clan ancestors are believed by the man of action to be either definite animals or vague spirit-animals who become transformed into human beings at a particular time. The thinker, on the other hand, postulates a generalized spirit-animal to whom the Winnebago are related through the intermediation of animals sent to the earth by him. Among the Dakota Indians the contrast is pushed much farther. What the ordinary man regards as eight distinct deities, for instance, the thinker takes to be aspects of one and the same deity.

To understand aboriginal man's concept of the external world we must, consequently, always bear in mind the existence of these two temperaments. The external world will obviously be described differently, depending upon whether it is the man of action or the thinker from whom our information has been obtained. Not to have recognized this is one of the facts which vitiate some of the best of our accounts of primitive civilizations and has made for both confusion and distortion.

The differences of viewpoint are fundamental and far-

[1] Johannes C. Andersen, *Maori Life in Ao-tea* (London, 1907), p. 150.

reaching for they concern the formulation of such concepts as the nature of the external world, its form, configuration, appearance, its origin as well as the proofs of its existence, and its relation to us. Through these pages I shall, therefore, as far as the evidence permits, try to keep the testimony of these two contrasting temperaments distinct.

In one sense, of course, it is quite erroneous to speak, for instance, of the concept of the external world as held by the man of action if we mean thereby to imply that he has given the subject much thought. Strictly speaking, he has no concept of the external world that has been specifically worked out by him. In the main, he unhesitatingly accepts the form which the thinker has given it. In all such matters he follows the lead of the thinker or, at least, repeats somewhat mechanically what the latter has said. Whatever interests he has are centered not upon the analysis of reality but upon the orientation of reality and the proofs for its existence.

Much of the indefiniteness, the vagueness, and the inconsistency in his characterization of the phenomenal world can be safely ascribed to this type of interest on his part. Among the Winnebago the sun is represented either by rays of light, a disk, or as some vague anthropomorphic being; the thunderbird as an eagle, a mythical bird or as a bald-headed man wearing a circlet of cedar leaves. Similarly, among the Ewe of West Africa the various spirits grouped under the generic name *tro* are vaguely described as invisible, but yet as having hands and feet resembling human beings, etc. Their shape is continually changing. In Melanesia among the Banks' Islanders, again, the natives told Bishop Codrington that the spirits called *vui*, live, think, have more intelligence than man, have no form to be seen and have no soul.

When we try to be specific and wish, for example, to discover what are the connotations for the man of action of such simple things as a tree, a mountain, a lake, etc., similar difficulties immediately arise. The first positive fact that emerges, when we attempt to make such an inquiry, to judge from my own investigations, is that an object is not thought of as the sum of all the sense data connected with it. A mountain is not thought of as a unified whole. It is neither static nor is it a series of inherently connected impressions. It is a continually changing entity from which one is repeatedly subtracting and to which one is repeatedly adding. In the case of the idea of a tree this lack of unification is, of course, even more marked. To talk of a tree being the same when it is constantly undergoing transformations is based on an assumption which the man of action simply does not make. We may, in fact, even go farther and claim that he does not in the least see the absolute necessity, for instance, of assuming that an acorn contains all the potentialities of an oak, or that the shape and appearance of some specific object, even granted that it retains this shape and appearance more or less permanently, is inevitably and indubitably its ultimate form. He conceives the possibility of imagining it having an entirely different appearance on the following day. This is a very important fact to remember when we are dealing with folkloristic beliefs and with magic.

It is reasonably clear, therefore, that for the man of action in a primitive community, the external world is dynamic and changing. So much, he feels, experience tells him. He refuses to state categorically or even to assume provisionally that it is permanent. Since he sees the same objects changing in appearance day after day, he regards this as definitely depriving them of immutability and permanence. This is actually tantamount to

saying that all the attributes of an object are not outside the perceiving self, to insisting that the object cannot be adequately defined in terms of sense data alone.

However, as soon as an object is regarded as a dynamic entity, then analysis and definition become both difficult and unsatisfactory. To think at all logically, no matter how concretistic the thought may be, there must be some static point. The man of action and the thinker are agreed on this. They disagree as to where we are to look for this point. The man of action insists that this static point is represented by its effect. Then an object becomes completely separated, even though it be only for a short time, from all other objective elements as well as from the perceiving self. A deity, for example, is his effect, an object is essentially its relation to man. Reality, in other words, is pragmatic.

That the above analysis is not an imaginary one of my own the following examples will prove: "The god of whom I speak is dead," said a Maori witness in a native land court of New Zealand. The court replied, "Gods do not die." "You are mistaken," continued the witness, "Gods do die unless there are *tohungas* (priests) to keep them alive." And in one of the Maori myths one deity is represented as addressing another deity in the following fashion: "When men no longer believe in us, we are dead." A Fiji Islander told an investigator that "A thing has *mana* (i.e., it is endowed with magic power), when it works; it has not *mana* when it doesn't work." In Eddystone Island, in Melanesia, it was said of a certain native that he was a spirit, a deity, when he said, "Go, for you will catch fish," and he caught fish. Then he possessed *mana*. But if he was not successful then he had no *mana*.

What functions, consequently, is true and what functions exists. Yet, what are we to understand by function-

ing, by a happening? I feel certain that our man of action would not deny that events take place between two objects outside of him and which in no way affect him. But it is a matter that hardly interests him. An event, for him, means essentially something that transpires between an object and himself. The problem that presents itself to him is how can he recognize an event?

We are accustomed to derive all our proof for the existence of an object from the evidence of our senses. The cultured man of Western Europe is, in the main, as we all know, visual-minded. That some inward feeling or stirring, some sudden and vague sensation or intuition, might be taken as real proof for the existence of an event would not occur to him. Not that any one today seriously denies the reality of such inward experiences. We know very well that many religions regard the presence of just such an inward response as proving the existence of God and, even, of specific dogmas. However, few of us would seriously contend that an inward experience, the presence of an inward thrill, would suffice to establish the reality of the whole cultural background. Yet this is precisely what does happen in aboriginal cultures, particularly for the man of action. Why, so he would contend, should something affect him in this way, if it were not true? This is an argument well known, of course, among us too.

It can be said of aboriginal peoples that reality is given to them in a threefold fashion. They are born into it; it is proved by external effects; and it is demonstrated by internal effects. They are thus, literally, living in what might be termed a blaze of reality. This is more particularly true for the man of action. For him an aura envelops every object in the external world.

It is somewhat difficult for one brought up in the assumptions and methods of the natural sciences of the

nineteenth century to visualize or appreciate the heightened atmosphere in which primitive man works. Yet we are in no sense dealing here either with a prelogical mentality or with a special type of participation as Lévy-Bruhl postulated originally and as so many theorists still contend. Primitive man in no sense merges himself with the object. He distinguishes subject and object quite definitely. In fact the man of action spends a good part of his time in attempting to coerce the object. What the latter says is simply this: not all the reality of an object resides in our external perception of it. There is an internal side and there are effects, constraints, from subject to object and from object to subject. Whatever happens must happen and in happening proves itself to be a reality; not the only reality necessarily, but the only one with which the man of action has any immediate concern.

From this analysis of the nature of reality and the external world as understood by the man of action, one which is never well formulated precisely because it is that of the man of action, let us turn to that of the thinker. It must never be forgotten, of course, that he shares many of the basic views of the former.

The first point to be emphasized is that the stresses are all different. From the man of action's viewpoint, so we have seen, an object or an event is not static nor does it possess any symbolic value. He predicates no unity for it beyond that of the certainty of continuous change and transformation. For him, a double distortion is involved in investing the transitory and ceaselessly changing object with a symbolic, idealistic, or static significance. For him, it would then be removed too far from reality. Moreover in thus separating the perceiving self from the object, we really render both of them meaningless. For the thinker, it goes without saying that

in order to think systematically, facts must have some degree of symbolic meaning. They must be static and there must be a fairly clearcut distinction between the ego and the external object. Every thinker, in other words, is impelled to study subject and object as though they were separated and isolated units.

The thinker, like the man of action, accepts both the ego, the external world and the social world as practically self-conditioned. But he is not interested merely in the fact that the world exists or that it has a definite effect upon him. He is constrained by his whole nature, by the innate orientation of his mind, to answer certain questions, to try to discover why there is an effect, what is the nature of relation between the ego and the world, and what precise role the perceiving self plays therein. Like all philosophers, he is interested in the subject as such, the object as such, and the relations between them. In the external world, as within himself, he is aware of movement and the shifting forms of objects. He is as much impressed by this as is the man of action. But, for him, the world must first be made static and objects must first take on a permanent or, at least, a stable form before one can deal with them systematically. Both these tasks he, therefore, sets out to achieve.

The attempts of these aboriginal thinkers are embodied in numerous creation myths. There we discover the task to be always the same: an original, moving, shapeless or undifferentiated world must be brought to rest and given stable form. This unstable and undifferentiated primal condition is remarkably well formulated in the cosmological myths of the Polynesians. Let me mention but one of variant versions of the Maori creation myth. There, for example, we find described six aeons of darkness:

1. Te Po-tamaku (the age smoothed off).
2. Te Po-kakarauri (the age of extreme darkness).
3. Te Po-aoao-nui (the age of great dawn).
4. Te Po-uriuri (the age of deep, black darkness).
5. Te Po-kerikeri (the age of darkness).
6. Te Po-tiwhatiwha (the age of gloom).

But to have made the world static and given objects specific forms is not enough. Such forms must be made reasonably permanent. This problem likewise our aboriginal thinkers attacked. I shall illustrate the nature of their attempts at solution by examples taken from two tribes, the Winnebago and the Maori.

According to Winnebago thinkers no beings had any permanent form originally. They were all a kind of *tertium quid*, neutral beings, that could at will transform themselves into human beings or spirit-animals. At one particular period in the history of the world they decided to use all their unlimited power of transformation to change themselves definitely either into animals or human beings. Since then animals have remained animals and human beings, human beings, except for those few human beings who still possess the power of transforming themselves, for short periods of time, into animals.

The solution offered by the Maori thinker is quite different. The capacity for unlimited transformation found among the Winnebago was an unknown concept to them. They raised an entirely different problem. All things, they insisted, contain within themselves elements of both good and evil and it is essential to have some control over them lest in their mutual reactions they nullify each other. Good and evil here are thought of in the most general way, in the sense of predicating for each thing inherent proper and positive qualities. In order to

achieve this control, certain supernatural beings called guardians were appointed. They were to watch over everything, prevent quarrels and all interferences, and confine each thing to its own proper activities.

There exist, however, many objects that manifestly do not have permanence of form and do look different at different times. Thinkers have always been prone to predicate a unity behind these changing aspects and forms. Primitive thinkers are at one with their European and Asiatic brothers here. Among the Winnebago, according to some individuals, the clan animal is a spirit whom you never see except in his manifestations as a real animal or some object he has bestowed upon you or in some stirring within you, etc. Among the Dakota the priests taught that one can never see the real sky but merely one aspect of it, the blue heavens. Similarly they claimed that we never see the real earth and rock but only their *tonwanpi*, i.e. (as nearly as one can translate the word), their divine semblance. Among the Maori we find the same philosophy. Many of the deities cannot really be seen. All we see of them is their *aria*, i.e., their reflections. What enables us to see a stone and what gives it shape is not the physical stone but the soul of the stone. The well-known authority on the Maori, Elsdon Best, tells the following remarkable story: "A missionary speaking to an old man remarked, 'Your religion is false; it teaches that all things possess a soul.' The Maori answered, 'Were a thing not possessed of the *wairua of an atua*, then that thing could not possess form,' " i.e., it could not have form unless it possessed the soul of a god.

Just as the man of action is primarily interested in the object, so is the thinker in the subject. This clashing of the two views is brought out most significantly in connection with one of the most famous aspects of primi-

tive religion, the belief in *mana* or magical power. Here, too, I think we can find an admirable example of how the thinker's formulation is more or less mechanically accepted by the non-thinker and how its failure to merge with the man of action's attitude leads to endless contradiction and confusion.

Every discussion of *mana* must necessarily go back to the famous definition of Codrington:[2] "*Mana* is a force altogether distinct from physical power which acts in all kinds of ways for good and evil and which it is of the greatest advantage to possess and control. . . . (It) shows itself in physical force or in any kind of power or excellence which a man possesses." This has been the generally accepted definition since Codrington's time. Now, quite apart from the fact, as some investigators have already pointed out, that Codrington's actual material frequently contradicts such an interpretation, it must be borne in mind that this definition of Codrington's is not one given to him by a native. It represents, on the contrary, his own interpretation of a number of facts. He was a very keen thinker and he is here giving us a thinker's attitude. I believe it is also the thinker's attitude among the Melanesians.

The thinker's viewpoint on what the concept of *mana* connotes comes out clearly among the Dakota[3] and the Maori. A Dakota priest told one of our best investigators, Walker, the following: All the gods have *ton*. *Ton* is the power to do supernatural things. This, Walker's informant expressly states is the priest's interpretation. "When the people say *ton*," he continued, "they mean

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[2] R. H. Codrington, *The Melanesians* (Oxford, 1891), p. 118.
[3] "The Sun Dance of the Oglala Division of the Dakota," Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History XVI, Part II (New York, 1917), p. 152 ff.

something that comes from a living thing, such as the birth of anything or the discharge from a wound or a sore or the growth from a seed." The two views are here neatly contrasted. But what is the essence of the priest's i.e., the thinker's view? The Dakota material is very significant in this connection. According to one of the priests interviewed, anything that acquires *ton* is *wakan* because it is the power of the spirit or the quality that has been put into it. "Every object in the world has a spirit and that spirit is *wakan.*" But where does *wakan* come from? "*Wakan* comes from the *wakan* beings. These *wakan* beings are greater than mankind in the same way that mankind is greater than animals. They are never born and they never die."

This same concept of the divine in objects and in man we find also among the Maori. According to them, every sentient being—and therein he includes the whole phenomenal world—possess a *toiora,* i.e., "the soul of God, of Io." This it is that gives him power and prestige.

To bring this very cursory discussion of *mana* and related beliefs to a close, I think we are amply justified on the basis of the above in saying that the two interpretations of man which we here find cutting across each other everywhere, represent, respectively, the view of the thinker and of the man of action. To the thinker, it is the generalized essence of a deity residing in an object or in man, and to the man of action, it is *that which works, has activity, is an effect.*

The clash of the two temperaments which we see manifesting themselves so clearly in the *mana* concept is even more pronounced when we attempt to study the theories postulated as to the interrelationship of the external world and man. To properly understand or appreciate them, we must have a fairly clear idea of the con-

cept of the Ego, of the perceiving self, as held by the thinker and the man of action.

In the present condition of our sources, it is impossible, except in the most general way, to keep the two viewpoints apart consistently. I think we are on fairly safe ground, however, in assuming that none of the very remarkable formulations with which we will specifically deal here, those of the Maori of New Zealand, the Oglala Sioux, and the Batak of Sumatra, are the work of the man of action. It is highly unlikely that such a man, if questioned, would be able to give us an account even remotely as unified and consistent.

Many of the ideas centering around personality and human relations and involving magic are obviously shared both by the man of action and the thinker. The thinker, we have seen, gives them a specific orientation and a definite formulation which is then inconsistently adopted by the man of action. This seems to me to be clearly illustrated by many of the theories of disease, of death, of the soul, of the nature of human attraction, etc., current among all tribes. In general, it may be claimed that the thinker employs the vast mass of folkloristic and magical beliefs, clustering around the Ego and personality to develop a more or less definite system of psychotherapy. Let me give a number of examples to make clear what I mean by this very important function of the thinker, a function that shows itself in connection with many aspects of aboriginal culture but which is perhaps best seen here.

Among the Maori, a charm is recited over the corpse prior to burial in order to dispatch the soul to spiritland and to prevent it from remaining in the world to annoy and frighten the living. Practices of this nature are to be found among all peoples. What interests us, in this par-

ticular case, however, are the actual words of the charm. These run as follows:

> "Farewell, O my child! Do not grieve; do not weep; do not love; do not yearn for your parent left by you in the world. Go ye for ever. Farewell for ever."

Here, what in origin was a mere magical incantation to assure the definite and complete separation of the dead from the living has been invested with a psychical side. In other words, the mere physical separation that presumably was attained by the simple recitation of a charm did not satisfy everyone. A psychical separation had likewise to be provided, and this we may infer was the work of the thinker. This psychotherapeutic side to magic has been overlooked by most students of ethnology and yet it could be easily demonstrated that not to recognize it means a failure to understand certain fundamental aspects of the primitive psyche.

Another example, also taken from the Maori, brings out even more strikingly what I have in mind. Among the Maori divorce consists of two parts, the external ritual, a kind of legal pronouncement that the two people concerned are no longer man and wife, and a second part which has as its object the obliteration of the sympathy and affection that once bound these two together. As a Maori priest told Mr. Best, our best authority, "The priest effaced the affections, that is, he cleansed or washed away the semblance of such; he abolished it."

But to return to our main problem; how does primitive man regard the Ego? It may at once be said that one thing he has never done: he has never fallen into the error of thinking of it as a unified whole or of regarding it as static. For him it has always been a dynamic entity, possessed of so many constituents that

even the thinker finds it difficult to fuse them into one unit. If what we have pointed out in a previous book[4] about the unusual knowledge and intuition of character possessed by aboriginal peoples is true, then we might have assumed, even in the absence of available data, that he would attempt fairly elaborate analyses of the Ego. Fortunately, we have the facts and, from their study, it is quite clear that the Maori and the Dakota, to select only those for whom our material is exceptionally good, look upon the Ego as composed of two parts, a body which is relatively unimportant, and a non-corporeal element made up, in its turn, of three constituents. Some such general formula will, I think, turn out to hold true for all primitive peoples.

In the descriptions of primitive man's analysis of the Ego which I shall now attempt, certain difficulties confront us. Few ethnologists have ever attempted to obtain from a native any systematized account of their own theory. It has, in fact, been generally contended that they had none. As a result, our material consists of isolated statements on different aspects of the concept of the Ego and we are, perforce, compelled to weld them into a consistent or inconsistent whole—as the case may be—in order to see their complete bearings. This, unfortunately, cannot be helped. I have tried, in what follows, however, to adhere rigorously to the facts and to let the native speak for himself wherever that was possible.

The procedure I shall follow is a very simple one: I shall analyze the concept of the Ego and of personality as held in three tribes—the Maori, the Oglala Sioux, and the Batak, and assume them to be fairly representative of that of all primitive peoples.

[4] Paul Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (New York, 1927), pp. 41-96.

The Maori analysis[5] is very complex and unusually profound. According to them, man and every sentient being, that is, everything conceived of as living, consists of an eternal element, an Ego which disappears after death, a ghost-shadow, and a body. The eternal element is, as we have already mentioned, the soul of God in man. It is called *toiora.* Some notion of what is understood by this term is given by an incident in the myth of Hine, the Earth-formed Maid. In this myth, when she is about to acquire mortal life, we find the sentence, "At that juncture, Hine brought herself to the world of life and also attained mortal life with the *toiora* of the enduring world."

The Ego proper consists of three things: the dynamic element, the life-essence or personality, and the physiological element. The first is named *mauri* and appears in two forms, an immaterial and a material. The material *mauri* is the active life principle itself, whereas the immaterial *mauri* is its symbol. The material *mauri* might be practically any object. Best tells us that in the north of New Zealand a tree was sometimes planted at the birth of a child and this tree was then regarded as the child's material *mauri.*

The same division into immaterial and material held for the life-essence, the *hau,* and apparently also for the third constituent of the Ego, the physiological aspect, called *manawa ora.* This was translated as breath, and breath, as life, the first connoting more the spiritual and the second, the purely physical breath of life.

In the ghost shadow, the *wairua,* we are dealing with the soul, strictly speaking. It is partially visible but does not properly possess a material form until it appears in

[5] My description is based on Elsdon Best, *Spiritual and Mental Concepts of the Maori,* Dominion Museum Monograph No. 2 (Wellington, New Zealand, 1922), pp. 1-20 ff.

the underworld. *Wairua* is the ingredient which mediates us to the external world; we would be lifeless and would decay without it. We might possess the life-principle and form but we could not be seen. In the same way it is the *wairua* that enables us to give form to things, to actually accomplish them. A Maori remarked to Best, "My *wairua* is very intent on this work that it may be well done." It is well to remember this, to realize that it is not simply with our senses that we see and touch and think. "Be of good cheer," a woman was told, "although we are afar off, yet our *wairua* are ever with you." And it is in the same strain that an old Maori wrote to Best, "We have long been parted and may not meet again in the world of life. We can no longer see each other with our eyes, only our *wairua* see each other, as also our friendship."

Although the *wairua* could not be destroyed, a person could be killed through his *wairua*. It was easily affected by magical spells. It was the *wairua* also that was affected when a man found himself afflicted with fear of coming evil, with a dread of impending danger, or if he had polluted his *tapu*.

The *wairua* is thus the integrating mechanism within us and it is exceedingly suggestive that it should be viewed as nonaggressive.

The fundamental distinction between immaterial and material is also illustrated by the Maori philosopher's interpretation of the body. It is viewed from two aspects: first, as an integrated whole, the resting place of the *toiora*, *wairua*, *mauri* and *manawa ora* with all this implies; and secondly, as composed of distinct organs, the bowels, the heart, the stomach, the liver, etc. Looked upon as a material entity it may have an immaterial form, and regarded as an immaterial entity it may possess a material form. In other words, it possesses, as an

integrated unit, both form and substance. The first, the Maori call *ahua* and the second, *aria*. Best gives as examples of the latter two greetings addressed to him, "Greeting to you, the *ahua* of your grandchild Marewa" and "Greeting to you, the *ahua* of the men of yore." As an example of the contrast in meaning, Best quotes a Maori as follows: "I saw clearly his bodily form (*ahua*); it is not the case that I saw distinctly (*aria*)." In the one case we are dealing with the material, in the other with the immaterial representation.

The viscera are the seat of thought, of the mind, and of conscience; the heart, of feelings, desires, and inclinations; the stomach, of feelings, desires, memory, etc. In other words, the traits that we associate with personality are all regarded as located in definite organs.

Such is the picture the Maori draw of the Ego. Its most salient feature is the insistence upon what might be termed multiple personality. Although no attempt has been made here to fuse these various constituents into one organic whole, this does not mean that all are not necessary before there is a true Ego which can function. What it does signify, however, is that these various elements can become dissociated temporarily from the body and enter into relation with the dissociated elements of other individuals. The nature of the impingement of individual upon individual and of the individual upon the external world is, thus, utterly different from anything that a Western European can possibly imagine. The medley of combinations and permutations it would permit is quite bewildering. What prevents anarchy is that all these constituents, independent as they are, nevertheless fall into a definite configuration within each man's Ego.

The error the Maori make lies, of course, in their concretization of ideas. Yet, as an attempted solution of

the problem of substance and form, it should rank very high. To have recognized in man the physiological, the vital essence, and the functioning of these two in a temporal body, and to have split up the body itself into form, substance, and "resting place," represents an unusual achievement. The recognition of multiple personality, which happens to be in consonance with some of the very latest results of psychological and psychiatric research is, on the other hand, not due to any conscious thought, intuitive or otherwise, but is the direct consequence of aboriginal man's unconquerable and unsentimental realism and his refusal to assume fictitious and artificial unities.

Many of the salient traits of the Maori analysis of the Ego and of personality are to be found in the next system to be discussed, that of the Oglala Dakota, although the emphases are, naturally enough, quite different.

As among the Maori, there are two external elements, the divine in man and the soul which begins its existence after death, and a mortal soul.

In formulating their analysis, however, the Oglala proceeded from another angle. Their interest is not so much centered upon characterizing the various constituents, the diverse souls that went into the making of the Ego, for instance, as in determining the relation of these souls to the various aspects of personality. It is from this point of view that I shall present the data.

The important elements of the Ego, according to the Dakota, are courage and fortitude, general disposition, the power to influence others and of forewarning oneself of good and evil, unusual actions and, finally, such negative elements as jealousy, maliciousness, etc.

Courage and fortitude come from the *sicun*. The *sicun* is given a man by Wakan Tanka, the supreme spirit, at

birth. A *sicun* is the *ton* (divine essence) of a deity. But perhaps I had better quote Walker's precise words.

> The *sicun* is an immaterial God whose substance is never visible. It is the potency of mankind and the emitted potency of the Gods. Considered relative to mankind it is many, but apart from mankind it is one. *Skan* (the supreme deity) imparts a *sicun* to each of mankind at birth. It remains with the person until death when it returns whence it came. Its functions are to enable the possessor to do those things which the beasts cannot do and to give courage and fortitude. It may be pleased or displeased with its possessor and may be operative or inoperative according to its pleasure. It may be invoked by ceremony or prayer, but it cannot be imparted to any other person or thing. Most of the Gods can emit their potencies and when so emitted their potencies become *sicunpi*. Such a *sicun* can be imparted to material things by a proper ceremony correctly performed by a shaman.[6]

The general disposition of a man comes from the *nagi*. The *nagi*, like the *sicun*, is immaterial and is bestowed upon man by the supreme deity at birth. Its substance, however, is visible at will and can communicate with mankind either directly or through a shaman. The *nagi* stays with a man until he dies.

The power to influence others, to forewarn of good and evil, to cause vitality, comes from the *niya*. It is immaterial but its substance is visible whenever it so wills. It, too, is imparted by the Supreme Deity to man but it does not reside in the body as do the *sicun* and the *nagi* but abides with it like a shadow. Upon death it goes to the supreme deity to testify regarding the

[6] *Op. cit.*, pp. 132-161.

conduct of the Ego to which it belonged. When it leaves the body, this means death.

It is the *niya* that causes life, i.e., life from the physiological side, although, just as among the Maori, there is strictly speaking nothing in life that is purely physiological. A native described it as follows:

> "A man's *ni* is his life. It is the same as his breath and that which gives him his strength. It is the *ni* which keeps the inside of a man clean. If the *ni* is weak he cannot perform this office and if it goes away the man dies. *Niya* is the ghost or spirit which is given to man at birth and which causes the *ni*. The Dakota have a ceremony which they call the *inipi* (sweat-bath). The idea of the Dakota is that the *inipi* makes man's spirit strong so that it may cleanse all within the body, and so that the *ni* may drive from his body all that makes him tired or that causes him to have evil thoughts." [7]

Certain peculiar actions, such as a man behaving in a nonhuman way and acting, for instance, as though he possessed a bear nature, are caused by the *nagiya*. *Nagiya* is, incidentally, one of the most difficult things in this Dakota theory of personality to understand properly. The *nagiya* is apparently an immaterial essence whose substance may appear in any form it chooses. It is never imparted to man by the Supreme Deity but is bestowed by the latter upon every material object save man, at its beginning. It may possess any other object. For instance, the *nagiya* of a wolf may possess a tree thus giving the tree the nature of a wolf. It is in this connection that it affects man, for the *nagiya* of any animal may possess a man and he will then act in a manner suggestive of that animal.

[7] *Op. cit.*, p. 156.

Jealousy, maliciousness, etc., are not conceived of as caused by any soul or any entity residing within man but are regarded as due to a discarnate *sicun*. If the *nagi* after death is adjudged unworthy to go on the spirit-trail it becomes a wandering *sicun*. Such a *sicun* can communicate with mankind but its communications are uncertain and not to be relied upon. It is a *sicun* of this type that causes jealousy, etc.

The fate of the three cardinal constituents of the Ego is extremely suggestive. The *sicun* goes to the deity to which it belongs, for it is but the divine essence temporarily implanted in man; the *nagi* goes to spirit-land and lives there, and the *niya* apparently disappears into the universe.

The body itself is merely an envelope which, after death, rots and becomes nothing.

The marked difference between the Maori and the Dakota conception is that the latter throws infinitely more of the responsibility for our actions upon the gods. For that reason we might have expected that most of the manifestations of the Ego would be considered as predetermined. But this is not true except for two of its aspects, the power to influence others and the instincts. Apart from this, there is complete free-will and personal responsibility, just as their ethical system clearly implies.

Among the Dakota, as we have just pointed out, a considerable degree of responsibility for one's actions was theoretically thrown upon the gods. In the next theory of the Ego to be discussed, that of the Batak of the East Indian Archipelago, this responsibility of the gods becomes complete, leading to a peculiar kind of dualism in each Ego and, theoretically at least, to a rigid fatalism. While the Batak theory of the Ego and of personality possibly owes some of its elaborations to the influence of

Mohammedanism, its basic and fundamental conceptions are clearly aboriginal.

According to the Batak, the Ego consists of the body, of the Ego-consciousness (*roha*), the ghost (*begu*), and the soul (*tondi*). In the *tondi* we have the divine in man, but in a sense different from what we found to be the case among either the Maori or the Dakota. The *tondi* is divine only because it is bestowed by the deities. It does not apparently partake of the divine itself. The *tondi* of man is an individualized piece of the soul-substance existing in the universe, and of which everything partakes. The *tondi* is, so to speak, a man within a man, and with its own will and desires which do not always correspond to those of the Ego, i.e., the *roha.* Yet it is the *tondi* that represents the true and fundamental part of every man's consciousness because it is regarded as having, of its own free will, selected its fate from among a large number of others before its incarnation in some particular person. The *tondi* alone is held responsible if it has not chosen a good fate. (Cf. pp. 330-332 of this book.)

Man is thus prejudged. This would imply that, according to the Batak, man has within him two basic constituents, the true, essential and predetermined (the *tondi*), and the ephemeral (the *roha*). Although it is the latter which does the actual thinking, feeling, desiring, etc., it is the *tondi* that is responsible for our corporeal and our psychical well-being; and, though the fate of each *tondi* has been predetermined, no one knows it except by his experience in life.

The *tondi* is supposed to reside in all the parts of the human body. In addition, it manifests itself in numerous other ways. First of all, it becomes materialized in the human shadow; second, in a man's name; third, in the

splendor that shines in the face of a happy man; and fourth, in the personal power he exercises over others. As might have been expected, some native thinkers have found it necessary to break with this unity in the idea of one *tondi* and have postulated seven, although little seems to be known about them.

How distinct from man the *tondi* is felt to be, in spite of the fact that it pervades the body, is shown by the worship accorded to it. We are, in fact, notwithstanding certain inconsistencies, dealing here with a concept identical with that of the Dakota *sicun* and of the "Guardian Spirit," so common in North America.

Of the Ego proper from our point of view, the *roha*, very little is said except that it thinks, feels, etc. It is apparently regarded as of no consequence except when it comes into conflict with the *tondi*.

With regard to the significance of the ghost (*begu*) there seem to be two contradictory theories. According to one, the *begu* is the *tondi* after death; according to the other, the *begu* constitutes all that is left of a man's personality after the *tondi* has left him. The *begu* is, thus, not a separate entity for the living man to the same extent as is the *wairua* of the Maori or the *nagi* of the Dakota. It is only potentially in him. After death, however, it attains an importance and significance a thousandfold greater than that of the *wairua* or *nagi*. It becomes associated with the dead, with the ancestors, and with all that is evil. The cause of evil is thus sought outside of man, although conceived of as emanating from something within him. This part of man's personality is, consequently, projected outside of himself. It is, perhaps, because of this complete projection of evil and of misfortune upon the outside world that the Batak give the impression of living in an atmosphere apparently pervaded by terror. This is, of course, only superficially,

what might be termed only "verbally," true. Yet it does not hold for either the Maori or the Dakota. We must, in fact, be very careful to distinguish carefully, in primitive societies, between the actual existence of widespread terror and verbal expressions of it.

What are the implications of such analyses of the Ego and personality as these just described? It is clearly manifest that the dynamic principle is here fundamental. The static principle is definitely only the temporary shell, the body, doomed to early extinction and decay. There is a marked inability or, if you will, unwillingness to express the psychical in terms of the body. The psychical must be projected upon the external world. The Ego, in other words, cannot contain within itself both subject and object, although the object is definitely conditioned by and exists within, the perceiving self. Thus, we have an Ego consisting of subject-object, with the object only intelligible in terms of the external world and of other Egos. It implies a tie between the Ego and the phenomenal world foreign to that which we assume. And this connection is very important, for it takes the form of an attraction, a compulsion. Nature cannot resist man, man cannot resist nature. A purely mechanistic conception of life is thus unthinkable. The parts of the body, the physiological functions of the organs, like the material form taken by objects in nature, are mere symbols, *simulacra,* for the essential psychical-spiritual entity that lies behind them. Here we have clearly a fusion between the viewpoints of the man of action and the thinker.

chapter four

PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES: THE RELIGIOUS AND THE NON-RELIGIOUS MAN

JUST AS WE FIND TWO CONTRASTING PSYCHOLOGICAL TYPES among aboriginal peoples, one oriented toward action and the other toward thinking and contemplation, so we encounter a division there of individuals into groups based on their inward relation to religious phenomena. By and large we can predicate two basic types, the inherently and continuously religious, and the essentially non-religious man. But such a classification has little meaning unless we first are quite clear as to what we understand by religion.

By religion is here meant the fusion of a particular feeling and attitude with an interconnected series of specific acts and beliefs. Both the feeling, the acts and the beliefs are merged and interpenetrated by the material

and spiritual implications of living in a clearly-defined cultural framework. Let us, for the moment, not raise the question as to which of these elements is most important or whether one preceded the other in the formation of what I am here calling religion. At all times, moreover, religion has had a primary social function namely, the validation of the life-values of man.

Feeling or attitude is admittedly not too adequate a term. However, what I intend by this term will emerge in the course of my discussion. Primary, of course, are the physical environment, the psycho-physical makeup of man and his cultural framework.

From the beginning of man's existence they have been inextricably interwoven. That man brought with him into the world 600,000 years ago psychical traits belonging to his animal-psychical ancestry we can safely assume. That, in the early period of his adjustment to the world around him and to the struggle for existence, the specific animal-psychical inheritance played an important role, this stands to reason. Yet, we must not overstress the animal inheritance even for that early period and regard man as a purely instinctual animal. Pekin man knew how to make fire and I suspect that for more than a hundred thousand years man has not regarded the objective world as simply the projection of his emotions and phantasies. What I am suggesting, then, is this, that from the very beginning of man's emergence there have existed individuals who were capable of discursive thinking, that man from the beginning has been not only *homo faber*, but also *homo oeconomicus-politicus* and *homo religiosus.*

However, I am not dealing here with the religion of prehistoric man but with that of living aborigines, the direct inheritors of a human experience that has now lasted more than half a million years. Throughout this

long period man has been faced with the problem of adjusting himself to the natural world around him, of developing methods for assuring his food supply and elaborating mechanisms for living harmoniously with his fellowmen and with himself. During the greater part of this time it is not too daring to assume that religions have existed. I would even hazard the guess that the feeling, attitude, actions and beliefs connected with it have not changed essentially throughout this long period of time.

Now the belief most inextricably connected with the specific feeling is that in a *something* outside of man, more powerful than man and influencing or exercising control over those elements in life upon which he lays most emphasis. I see no objection to calling this *something* a spirit as long as it is not thought of in too definite a form. For the present, that is immaterial. The important thing to remember is that this *something* is individualized.

Let us forget, for the moment, all questions as to the nature of the connection of the belief in this *something* with the other elements in our definition and focus our attention upon one point, namely, that a number of things are, from the start, predicated about it. It is outside of man; it is more powerful than man; it exercises control over man's life values. Let us also remember that the three things here predicated are always bound together and form a single, indissoluble whole.

However, this positing of a *something*, of a being outside of man, is not the only thing involved here. Many miscellaneous beliefs are also included. These belong strictly to the folkloristic background which varies from group to group. Of these, two seem to be constant, the belief in a soul or souls and the belief in immortality.

It is when we attempt to characterize specifically the

nature of the feeling and attitude that our difficulties begin. We must be careful to distinguish them clearly and adequately from other related feelings and attitudes and not predicate the existence of the latter for all human beings or, for that matter, assume that they are found with the same intensity in any person all the time.

This feeling and attitude possesses both a physiological and a psychological side. The physiological side is expressed in acts which are always associated with the external preparations for mental and emotional concentration—the closing of the eyes, reclining of the head, fasting, some form of washing, etc.

The psychological side is expressed in a far more than normal sensitiveness when in the presence of certain external objects. This manifests itself, positively, in a sensation of exhilaration, mild euphoria, etc., and, negatively, in one of terror, fear, helplessness, bewilderment, self-rejection, etc. This more than normal sensitiveness is always accompanied by a marked tendency to become absorbed in internal sensations, stirrings and feelings, and by an equally marked tendency for interest in external impressions to be suspended.

The primary question then becomes: how shall we account for this more than normal sensitiveness in the presence of this *something*?

It goes without saying that no mature individual, in a given group, is not thoroughly familiar with the religious notions of his tribe. It likewise goes without saying or, at least should, that, such being the case, an individual is so to say prepared beforehand both for the normal indications of this *something*—let us call it the supernatural—and for the sensations and emotions he has been taught to expect as being associated with it. Consequently, we must assume that this more than normal sensitiveness arises when an object or a situation is com-

pletely outside those with which a man is acquainted. On such occasions there arises, at least, among primitive peoples, the awareness of an unbalance in the order of the external world which is accompanied by a psychical unbalance or a crisis of varying intensity within oneself.

I do not think that one can overestimate the importance attached by aboriginal peoples to the external world's maintaining its balance, maintaining its proper and fixed order. That order is assumed to have existed either from beginning of time or to have been established at some particular time in the dim past. Its characteristics are fixed. It can be interfered with in only two ways, either by supernatural beings or by man.

In the second of our unbalances, that within man himself, we are dealing with a psychical crisis which the individual cannot solve and for which he needs help. So they, the spirits he has predicated, they, upon whom man must lean in order to live, they, who are eternal and omnipresent, also become his helpers and healers. It is because they have now and have always had this double relationship to him that they have become truly supernatural or better, super-natural.

I am using the term *psychical unbalance, psychical crises,* in a very broad sense so that it can include a wide range of mental conditions, varying from a slight unbalance to a true psycho-neurosis.

My postulation that man needs help from supernatural beings because of the existence of an unbalance within his own psyche brings us to what I regard as one of the fundamental problems in all religion, namely, how many individuals possess such a psychical unbalance? What are its characteristics, what are the signs by which it can be recognized? How continuous is it? What factors have brought it about?

Let me attempt to answer the last question first and

begin where one must always begin, *with man in the midst of life.* It is best in such a discussion, I feel, to start with concrete examples, and I shall, therefore, select two from a tribe that has been better and more fully described than any other in the world, the Eskimo.

Let me begin with a narrative concerning an Eskimo named Aua from Knud Rasmussen's *Across Arctic America,*[8]

> It was twilight, the brief day was almost at an end, but the moon was up, and one could see the storm-driven clouds racing over the sky; every now and then a gust of snow came whirling down. Aua pointed out over the ice, where the snow swept this way and that in whirling clouds, "Look," he said impressively, "snow and storm; ill weather for hunting. And yet we must hunt for our daily food; Why? Why must there be storms to hinder us when we are seeking meat for ourselves and those we love?"
>
> "Why?"
>
> Two of the hunters were just coming in after a hard day's watching on the ice; they walked wearily, stopping or stooping every now and then in the wind and the snow. Neither had made any catch that day; their watching had been in vain.
>
> "Why?"
>
> I could only shake my head. Aua led me again, this time to the house of Kuvdlo, next to our own. The lamp burned with the tiniest glow, giving out no heat at all; a couple of children cowered shivering in a corner, huddled together under a skin rug. And Aua renewed his merciless interrogation: "Why should all be chill and comfortless in this little home? Kuvdlo has been out hunting

[8] (New York, 1927), pp. 129 ff.

since early morning; if he had caught a seal, as he surely deserved, for his pains, the lamp would be burning bright and warm, his wife would be sitting smiling beside it, without fear of scarcity for the morrow; the children would be playing merrily in the warmth and light, glad to be alive. Why should it not be so?"

"Why?"

Again I could make no answer. And Aua took me to a little hut apart, where his aged sister, Natseq, who was ill, lay all alone. She looked thin and worn, and too weak even to brighten up at our coming. For days past she had suffered from a painful cough that seemed to come from deep down in the lungs; it was evident she had not long to live.

And for the third time Aua looked me in the face and said: "Why should it be so? Why should we human beings suffer pain and sickness? All fear it, all would avoid it if they could. Here is this old sister of mine, she has done no wrong that we can see, but lived her many years and given birth to good strong children, yet now she must suffer pain at the ending of her days?"

"Why? Why?"

After this striking object lesson, we returned to the hut, and renewed our interrupted conversation with the others.

"You see," observed Aua, "even you cannot answer when we ask you why life is as it is. And so it must be. Our customs all come from life and are directed towards life; we cannot explain, we do not believe in this or that; but the answer lies in what I have just shown you.

"We fear!

"We fear elements with which we have to fight in their fury to wrest our food from land and sea.

"We fear cold and famine in our snow huts.

> "We fear the sickness that is daily to be seen amongst us. Not death, but the suffering.
>
> "We fear the souls of the dead, of human and animal alike.
>
> "We fear the spirits of earth and air.
>
> "And therefore our fathers, taught by their fathers before them, guarded themselves about with all these old rules and customs, which are built upon the experience and knowledge of generations. We know not how nor why, but we obey them that we may be suffered to live in peace. And for all our angakoqs and their knowledge of hidden things, we yet know so little that we fear everything else. We fear the things we see about us, and the things we know from the stories and myths of our forefathers. Therefore we hold by our customs and observe all the rules of tabu."

If one will read carefully what Aua here says, one will be immediately impressed by the fact that there seems to be a contradiction between his whole behavior and the constant reiteration of the main theme of his explanation, *fear*. He specifies clearly, what he means by fear. It is contrasted with his belief and with his explanation. It is not fear as such but fear, so he insists, that is inspired by a specific economic situation with its attendant pain and suffering and this, in turn, is due to the nature of the physical environment. Nevertheless, Aua himself gives no indication that he is emotionally involved, at least to the extent of such involvement constituting any actual emotional unbalance. Life is that way. "Our customs come from life and are directed towards life," so he insists. He falls back upon the experience of the past and upon the shaman who are the custodians of that experience so that he and his may be suffered to live in peace. He is a man of action, a matter-of-fact man. The

vast majority of Eskimo are. Our Eskimo sources are replete with just such statements.

With the statement of the Iglulik matter-of-fact, Aua, let us now contrast that of the Caribou Eskimo shaman, Igjugarjuk:[9]

> "When I chose to be a shaman, *I chose suffering* through the two things that are most *dangerous* to us humans, suffering through *hunger* and suffering through *cold* . . . (After a while) I . . . could begin to eat . . . food on which there is never taboo . . . (eventually) I was forced to eat the meat diet which is prescribed for all those who *must do penance in order to become clean.*"

He is dragged to a spot far from any human trails where a snowhut is built for him just large enough for him to get under cover and sit down. But let me continue in his own words:

> "As soon as I had become alone Perqanaq (his initiator) enjoined me *to think of one single thing all the time* I was to be there, to want only one single thing, and that was to draw Pinga's (i.e., the spirit's) attention to the fact that there I sat and wished to be a shaman. Pinga should own me.
>
> "My novitiate took place in the middle of the coldest winter, and I, who never got anything to warm me, and *must not move*, was very cold, and it was so *tiring to sit without daring to lie down*, that sometimes it was as if *I died a little.*
>
> "Only toward the end of the thirty days did a helping spirit come to me, a lovely and beautiful helping spirit, whom I had never thought of; it was a white woman; she came to me whilst I had collapsed, exhausted, and was sleeping. But still I

[9] K. Rasmussen, *Observations on the Intellectual Culture of the Caribou Eskimo* (Copenhagen, 1930), pp. 52-55.

saw her lifelike, hovering over me, and from that day I could not close my eyes or dream without seeing her. There is this remarkable thing about my helping spirit, that I have never seen her while awake, but only in dreams. She came to me from Pinga and was a sign that Pinga had now noticed me and would give me powers that would make me a shaman. . . .

"These days of 'seeking knowledge' are very tiring, for one must walk all the time . . . I am usually quite done up, tired not only in body, but also in head, when I have found what I sought."

Finally, we come to Igjugarjuk's conclusions which include not only his theory of how true wisdom is to be obtained but his criticism of the methods and practices of other shaman.

"We shaman of the interior have no special spirit language, and believe that the real *angatkut* do not need it. On my travels, I have sometimes been present at a seance among the salt water-dwellers . . . these *angatkut* never seemed trustworthy to me. It always appeared to me that these saltwater *angatkut* attached more weight to tricks that would astonish the audience, when they jumped about the floor and lisped all sorts of absurdities and lies in their so-called spirit language. To me all this seemed only amusing and as something that would impress the ignorant. A real shaman does not jump about the floor and do tricks, nor does he seek by the aid of darkness, by putting out the lamps, to make the minds of his neighbours uneasy.

"For myself I do not think I know much, but I do not think that *wisdom or knowledge about things that are hidden* can be sought in that manner. True *wisdom is only to be found far away from people, out in the great solitude, and it is*

not found in play but only through suffering. Solitude and suffering open the human mind, and therefore a shaman must seek his wisdom there."

What manner of man is he who speaks thus? What manner of man is this who speaks as does our Caribou Eskimo, Igjugarjuk?

Clearly, in the persons of Aua and Igjugarjuk, we have two contrasting temperaments. In the second case, the emphasis is upon withdrawing from the world of men, upon suffering, upon looking inward. More than that. Not only is there the emphasis upon certain behavior traits, but there is a specific and conscious evaluation of them. No matter-of-fact man, no man of action, is speaking here, but a mystic and a thinker. Only thus can true wisdom be found, only thus can the mind be opened and the knowledge of hidden things be acquired, only thus can contact be made with the supernatural world.

In the first case, that of Aua, this is characteristically different. Suffering and pain, far from being extolled, are bitterly condemned. They constitute regrettable and unjust facts of life, to be accepted but never condoned. The fear he stresses so dramatically obviously produces no perceptible unbalance in his psyche. He speaks of no need for help from supernatural agencies. He accepts and obeys the old rules and customs without inquiring into the whys and the wherefores. He ends by referring somewhat slightingly to the shaman and their knowledge. Aua is, in short, temperamentally a non-religious man, just as Igjugarjuk is temperamentally a religious one. The latter is not the only type of religious temperament, but it is a fundamental one and, probably, the type which is responsible for the basic formulations of the nature of the religious experience.

Igjugarjuk, in the description of his novitiate, makes

a very important statement, "Pinga should own me," i.e., take possession of me. This is the only indication of a belief common, not only among the Eskimo and the natives of eastern Siberia but among the vast majority of aboriginal peoples. According to this belief it is the supernatural being who selects you, in fact, frequently seizes and constrains you to seek solitude, to turn your mind inward, to suffer. In an example given by Rasmussen from the Caribou Eskimo, the intervention of the spirits is explicitly stated. Kinalik, a woman shaman-to-be, is represented as having dreamt that a certain man in her tribe would become ill. This was interpreted as a sign of her possessing a disposition for shamanism, the dream having been put into her by spirits. This is, of course, a very mild type of supernatural intervention. I am mentioning it purposely, however, because it brings us to one of our fundamental problems, the innate disposition for shamanism.

When an Eskimo shaman says he has been selected or constrained by a spirit, that is simply another way for describing his temperamental make-up, one in which, as we shall see, we are dealing with individuals whose psychical unbalance and whose psychical crises are continuously present. This is a condition which they frequently recognize clearly themselves and which is also recognized by the community. Only examples, however, can bring home to the reader the full meaning of what is involved and implied here.

Let me begin with the tribes of Northeast Siberia, the classical land of shamanism. Here, according to M. A. Czaplicka, who has published an excellent summary of the facts, to be a shaman means to be nervous and excitable, frequently to the verge of insanity. Czaplicka then points out that it is the practice of his vocation which prevents his psychical disorientation. She gives instance

upon instance taken from the works of the great authorities on the Siberian tribes, Jochelson, Bogoras, and others to emphasize both the necessity of this extreme form of psychical unbalance and the clearcut realization on the part of the shaman, that the practice of shamanism cures him. Quoting from Bogoras, she tells of a Chuckchee woman who gives the following description of the requirements:[10]

> "I was told that people about to become shaman have fits of wild paroxysms alternating with a condition of complete exhaustion. They will lie motionless for two or three days without partaking of food or drink. Finally they retire to the wilderness where they spend their time enduring hunger and cold in order to prepare themselves for their calling."

Although the Eskimo shaman, too, is well aware of the curative qualities of the practice of his profession, few state it in as explicit a manner as does the following Yakut-Tungus shaman:

> "When I was twenty years old, I became very ill and began 'to see with my eyes, to hear with my ears' that which others did not see or hear; nine years I struggled with myself, and I did not tell anyone what was happening to me . . . At last I became so seriously ill that I was on the verge of death; but when I started to shamanize, I grew better; and even now when I do not shamanize for a long time, I am liable to be ill."[11]

The acceptance of the call thus signifies a person's recognition of his mental illness, as well as his recognition that he has the means at hand for recovery.

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[10] Aboriginal Siberia (Oxford, 1914), pp. 172 ff.
[11] *Ibid.*

Among other tribes this recognition of the therapeutic value of the exercise of the medicine-man's profession, while implicit, is never made clear and explicit. The temperamental requirements, however, are always essentially the same and duly recognized.

Among the Arunta of Central Australia, when a man is about to become a medicine-man, it is done in the following manner: the evil spirits seize upon some person who is foot-loose and deprive him of his senses so that he runs about like one crazy. He can rest neither by day nor night. Among the Mentawei of the Dutch East Indies it is much the same. The usual procedure for becoming a seer is to be summoned through sickness, dreams, or temporary insanity.

The tribes from which the above examples have been taken represent relatively simple civilizations. But let us now turn to more complex cultures, such as those of the Amazulu of South Africa and the Ashanti of West Africa. For both we have unusually good descriptions. Here, be it remembered, we are no longer dealing with loosely organized shaman or medicine-men but with true priests, highly organized, and with complex cults.

For the Amazulu, Callaway[12] obtained the following detailed description of the initiation of a diviner:

> The condition of a man who is to be a diviner is this: At first he is apparently robust; but in the process of time he begins to be delicate, not having any real disease . . . He begins to be particular about food, and abstains from some foods . . . He is continually complaining of pains in different parts of his body. And he tells them that he has dreamt that he is being carried away by a river. He dreams of many things, and his body is

[12] H. Callaway, *The Religious System of the Amazulu* (London, 1870), pp. 259 ff.

muddled and he becomes a house of dreams. And he dreams constantly of many things, and on wakening says to his friends: "My body is muddled today; I dreamt many men were killing me; I escaped I know not how. And on waking, one part of my body felt different from other parts, it was no longer alive all over." At last the man is very ill, and they go to the diviner to inquire.

The diviners do not at once see that he is about to have a soft head. It is difficult for them to see the truth; they continually talk nonsense. . . .

(Finally) a diviner comes and says that all the others are wrong . . . (He says) the other diviners have gone astray. They were not initiated in a proper way. Why have they been mistaken when the disease is evident? . . . As for the man . . . he is possessed by the *itongo* (ancestors). Your people (ancestors) move in him . . . They are divided into two parties; some say, "No, we do not wish that our child should be injured." It is for that reason and no other that he does not get well. If you bar the way against the *itongo*, you will be killing him. For he will not be a diviner; neither will he be a man again; he will be what he is now. If he is not ill, he will be delicate, and become a fool, and be unable to understand anything . . .

He shows that he is about to become a diviner by yawning . . . and by sneezing . . . And men say: "No. Truly it seems as though this man was about to be possessed by a spirit."

After that he is ill: he has slight convulsions . . . He habitually sheds tears, at first slight, and at last he weeps aloud. . . .

In this state of things, they daily expect his death. . . . The people wonder . . . and then they begin to take courage, saying: "Yes, now we see that it is the head."

Among the Ashanti we also are dealing essentially with this same kind of spirit-possession, with a seizure which comes upon a man unawares. All those who become priests or priestesses interpret this susceptibility to spirit-possession as due to temperamental traits they possess. Only such individuals, so it is believed, would, when hearing the voice of a god, fall down in a fit or go into a trance. Here, where everything is so thoroughly organized and ritualized, only a thoroughly qualified priest can interpret what has happened to a man in such a condition. According to the accepted theory, such a trance-state is explained as a sign that some particular spirit or god wishes to marry the afflicted person. This, the latter must accept.

With the exception of the initiation of the Caribou Eskimo Igjugarjuk, all the examples given above deal with spirit-possession in all its varied forms. If we leave aside the Ashanti case where everything is highly stylized, the two things that strike one most are the suffering which must be endured and the element of constraint exercised by the spirit. The shaman and medicine-man involved seem to have no freedom of choice. This reaches its extreme form among the eastern Siberian tribes where one, likewise, finds the psychical unbalance taking on pathological proportions.

But there are two other characteristics of spirit-possession in this region which deserve mention. One I have already commented upon, the clear-cut understanding of the therapeutic value of the shamanistic art. The other is the struggle which is waged by some individuals against becoming shaman. Bogoras tells us that many young people prefer death to the call of the spirits. He seems to interpret this as being an indication that they cannot stand the physical hardships and the mental suffering involved. Some of these young men, in their men-

tal struggle against the call are said literally to sweat blood on their forehead and temples.

There can be little question but that we are dealing in such cases with individuals unqualified temperamentally for shamanism who are either being forced into the profession by their elders or who have been attracted to it because of the prestige and power the shaman possesses. It stands to reason that, even under special conditions, only a small proportion of a population can be markedly unbalanced psychically. A significant number must become shaman, medicine-men or priests for reasons not springing from their particular temperament. They act and behave as though they were going through the same experience as the shaman who has the proper psychical make-up. In such cases they either succeed in inducing such experiences or they simulate them. Occasionally they break down. The community seems to recognize that such individuals belong in a class distinct from the truly qualified priest and shaman, and the latter are full of denunciations against them of the kind we have just quoted from the Eskimo and Amazulu.

If it is a fact that, in so many instances of spirit-possession, the individual seized upon has no freedom of choice, that he is often brutally coerced, wherein lies the explanation? I have already foreshadowed it. It is not the spirits who are coercing and constraining him. He is being constrained by his own desperate psychical needs, by his own psychical crisis which he is seeking to resolve. In a sense it can be said that the nature of the spirits who appear to him or whom he thinks, at times, he himself is selecting, as well as the intensity of their coercion, varies in direct proportion to his own need. The hardships he endures, the sufferings he imposes upon himself, even though they also constitute part of a stereotyped procedure, represent his own struggles to

be at one with himself, to be whole and integrated. Help must come from without. That he understands what is happening to him inwardly we have seen.

This then is the primary problem, the restoration to psychical wholeness of a suffering, disoriented individual. To this recognized objective there is always added another, that of restoring others to health, physical and psychical. That this is, at times, prompted by altruism there can be little doubt, especially when a shaman is treating members of his immediate family where love and attachment play a very great role. Generally, however, nonaltruistic motives are involved. Being a shaman, healing other people, brings power, prestige and wealth. In the main, the shaman and medicine-men of the type here discussed are egotists and obsessively self-centered. Their constrained preoccupation with themselves and their own inward problems almost force them to be so.

Summing up then we can say the following: the insistence found in all our narratives upon the necessity of suffering to attain "wisdom," the withdrawal from the world, the expressed or implied turning-inwards, these are mechanisms only secondarily devised for obtaining and authenticating the contact between man and the supernatural world. Primarily they represent concrete facts imposed upon certain individuals by the very nature of their physical-mental constitution. They spring from a conflict within oneself, constitute the splitting off, actually, of a conscious from an unconscious state, and a subsequent reintegration of the two on a new level of awareness. Since the individuals who possessed this temperamental constitution are, in the majority of cases, exceedingly articulate, they have expressed verbally and often dramatically what they felt, what they saw and what they were doing. Frequently, as our examples show, they have made both an analysis and a synthesis of their

inward life. This was then projected outward and reenacted before the world, not simply as their purely personal struggle for inward security and integration, but, symbolically, as man's perpetual struggle for security. Obviously, the pattern of that drama must have been fixed and elaborated millennia ago. It was fixed and elaborated, however, by individuals with the same temperamental make-up. Although not necessarily always the dominant one, it is found in all religions, to be followed by everyone whether possessing the physical-mental constitution which originally led to the formulation of this pattern, or not.

Contrasted with this there exists another pattern, with marked similarities and with marked differences. It is particularly common in North America. Here, too, we find a withdrawal from the group, a turning-inward, and suffering. But there is no psychical unbalance present. Suffering is brought about either by some personal catastrophe or represents a stereotyped requirement. The theory behind it is well brought out in the following narrative from the Teton Dakota:[13]

> All classes of people know that when human power fails they must look to a higher power for the fulfillment of their desires. There are many ways in which the request for help can be made . . . *This depends on the person. Some like to be quiet, and others want to do everything in public. Some like to go alone, away from the crowd, to meditate upon many things.* In order to secure a fulfillment of his desire a man *must qualify himself* to make his request. Lack of preparation would mean failure to secure a response to his petition. Therefore when a man makes up his

[13] Frances Densmore, *Teton Dakota Music*, Bureau of American Ethnology, Bul. 61 (1918), pp. 122 ff.

> mind to ask a favor of *Wakan tanka* he makes due preparation. *It is not fitting that a man should suddenly go out and make a request of Wakan tanka. When a man shuts his eyes, he sees a great deal.* He then enters his own mind, and things become clear to him, but objects passing before his eyes would distract him. For that reason a dreamer makes known his request through what he sees when his eyes are closed. It has long been his intention to make his request of *Wakan tanka*, and he resolves to seek seclusion on the top of a butte. . . . When at last he goes there he closes his eyes, and his mind is upon *Wakan tanka* and his work. The man who does this usually has in mind some animal which he would like for protection and help. No man can succeed in life alone, and he cannot get the help he wants from men . . .
>
> Ever since I have known the old Indians and their customs, I have seen that in any great undertaking it is not enough for a man to depend simply upon himself. Most people place their dependence on the medicine-man who understands this life and all its surroundings and are able to predict what will come to pass. They have the right to make these predictions. If as we sit here we should hear a voice speaking from above, it would be because we had the right to hear what others could not hear, or we might see what others had not the right to see because they were not properly qualified.

The striking differences between this pattern and that found among the Eskimo emerge immediately. Here, too, we find a withdrawal from the group, a turning-inward and suffering. But these do not flow from any constitutional psychical unbalance. In one case from the Ojibwa, for example, suffering is brought about by an-

other's death; in another case, from the Winnebago, it is simply a stereotyped requirement.

In so far as grief can and does produce a temporary unbalance it is present in the Ojibwa instance. Yet even the spirit-deities do not countenance or approve of it as such. There a young boy, is, in fact, reprimanded for his grief and gently informed that in suffering there is no merit. In the Winnebago instance the reprimand is not gentle but, on the contrary stern and severe.

Suffering is always interpreted as an external method, to serve only one purpose, namely that of creating the proper attitude of humility, of helplessness and of awe, in the presence of the supernatural. This is its primary function. In a few instances we are concerned with unrelieved egotism and power-drive. Both have to be discarded before the spirit-deities will listen and grant the suppliant his requests.

In this second pattern each experience has its own physiognomy. In one case found among the Ojibwa, for instance, we have a beneficent spirit coming to a young man, unsolicited, in order to help him in his bereavement and to bestow upon him all that an individual craves ideally. Here the emphasis is upon love and the reward which comes to a truly humble man who makes no demands.

In another instance, found among the Winnebago, we have, on the contrary, a man finally rewarded for making the normal demands and persevering despite repeated rebuffs and humiliation as soon as he learns how to make his demands properly. In a third case from the Teton Dakota example we have quoted, we have a philosopher stating the limitations of human power, recognizing that there are many ways for establishing contact with the supernatural and granting the legitimacy of each one of these various methods, yet, at the same time,

insisting upon one basic requirement: a proper external and internal preparation. The matters which become clear to him when he enters his own mind, as he says, are not inward, but outward things, the attainment of the normal desires of man. He seeks seclusion for meditation. Entering one's own mind is to him simply another way of saying *intense concentration.* And so here the emphasis is upon moral and spiritual integrity, upon understanding oneself, upon one's relation to man and the supernatural, upon piety.

In the Ojibwa and Teton cases there is no indication of coercion or constraint either by the spirits upon man or by man upon the spirits. No one is here *possessed.* Although belonging to distinct and different spheres of existence, man and the spirits stand on their own.

In one Winnebago case, the situation is somewhat different. Here we do find an attempt at constraint on the part of the faster. How is it to be explained? Since we know nothing about him as an individual, it is, of course, hazardous to make any definite inferences. My feeling is that we are here dealing with a person whose temperamental make-up is that of a typical shaman, i.e., of a man with a specific psychical unbalance who has been forced to conform to the second of our basic patterns.

Only one conclusion, it seems to me, can be drawn from the above cases, namely that we are dealing here primarily with normal individuals, having at best, the temporary psychical tensions and psychical unbalance of normal individuals; no more. It is because they are normal that their fasting-experiences are so notably free of the element of horror and terror, and that the prevailing tone is one of ecstasy and mild euphoria.

What role fear and terror play in the lives of the Eskimo and Siberian shaman we have already pointed out. If we now turn to the actual delineation of the

spirits themselves we find that to inspire terror constitutes their chief trait. Both the Russian ethnologist Sternberg and Rasmussen have pointed this out in great detail.

Sternberg, for instance, tells how he once saw, in eastern Siberia, a young Gilyak boy suddenly wake up from his sleep and throw himself about and shout as shaman generally do, and how, when this was over, the boy's face looked worn and tired. Afterwards he told Sternberg that during the sleep which had preceded this outbreak, two helping spirits had appeared to him whom he recognized as his father's and they had said to him, "We used to play with your father, let us now play with you also." The suffering of the Yakut shaman who have a dog as their helping spirit is even worse, for the dog gnaws the shaman's heart with his teeth and tears his body to pieces.

The whole purpose of this long, arduous and painful initiation of the shaman in Siberia, so runs one of the interpretations, is to make the impact of the spirit upon the shaman as light as possible. The amelioration of this impact as well as the overwhelming of the obstacles barring the approach to the spirit is one of the salient characteristics of the religious pattern the shaman devised. In short, both the typical Siberian and Eskimo shaman can only envisage this approach to the supernatural in terms of their own struggle for psychic equilibrium. In the degree to which the shaman resolves his own conflicts and attains a measure of equilibrium, the road to the supernatural will be smooth and even and the face of the supernatural will be kinder. It is not without deep significance that this is represented as coming about thanks to others, with the result that he becomes a socialized being again and can properly function once more.

All this and more is implied in a narrative secured by

Rasmussen among the Caribou Eskimo[14] concerning a visit to the dreaded Takanakapsaluk, the *Mistress of the Sea.* I shall relate it in some detail.

Such a visit generally takes place only when there is a real crisis, a bad hunting season or a dearth of meat, for instance. A shaman is summoned and directed to seek out Takanakapsaluk and induce her to release the animals she is holding back. Elaborate preparations, which certainly do nothing to ameliorate the situation, are made.

Here tensions and anxieties, personal and communal, are piled up in profusion, one upon the other.

The shaman is placed at the back of his bench in his hut and hidden from view by a skin curtain. He is then tied up, his hands behind his back, his head lashed fast to his knees. Those who have tied him, then take fire from the lamp on the point of a knife, pass it over his head, draw rings in the air and exclaim, "Let him who is going on a visit now be carried away!" The shaman sits there in meditation, calls upon his helping spirits and cries out repeatedly: "The way is made ready for me; the way is opening before me!" The assembled people thereupon answer in chorus, "Let it be so!"

When the helping spirits have appeared, so Rasmussen was informed, the earth opens before the shaman, only to close again. An intense struggle is now supposed to take place between him and the hidden, mysterious powers he encounters. It is only after he has defeated them that he can finally assure those present above that the way is really open. As soon as this is announced, everyone present cries out: "Let the way be open, let a way be made for him!" The actual journey now begins. At first the shaman's voice can be heard clearly

[14] Observations on *The Intellectual Culture of the Caribou Eskimo* (Copenhagen, 1930), pp. 124-127.

but, gradually, it becomes weaker and, finally, it is lost in the distance.

As he disappears, the strangest things are happening in the house itself. The clothes which the shaman has taken off come to life and fly over the heads of the singers. One can hear the sighing and breathing of souls long dead. All the lamps have been put out and the sighing and breathing of the departed souls are like the voice of spirits moving deep in the sea.

Depending upon the powers of the shaman he will encounter few or many obstacles on his way. One thing a shaman knows immediately as he approaches the house of the dreaded deity, namely, whether she is hostile toward human beings at the moment or not. If she is hostile then a wall will bar the entrance to her domain. This wall the shaman must break down and level to the ground.

Two difficulties and obstacles every shaman will encounter on this journey, namely a large dog stretching itself across the passage, and the guardian of the dead souls. The dog shows its teeth and growls, annoyed at being disturbed at his meal, a meal which often consists of the bones of a still living human being; the guardian of the souls of the dead will endeavor to seize him and place him with the dead.

Now the dog he must thrust aside, and he must assure the guardian that he is still alive.

He has now reached his goal and he is face to face with the *Mistress of the Sea.* She is represented as being always angry. Her hair hangs down loosely over one side of her face in a tangled, untidy mass, completely hiding her eyes so that she is blinded. The misdeeds and offenses committed by men and women gather in dirt and impurity over her body. All the foul emanations from the sins of mankind are suffocating her.

If we compare this description of a journey to the realm of the dead by a living man with that given by Kohl [15] for the Ojibwa the contrast is tremendous. The spirit-deities here are friendly and sympathetic. At worst, they are neutral. The distance, physically as well as psychologically, separating the deity from the suppliant is small. Obstacles barring the road exist, but they seem to be present only for the specific purpose of being overcome. Those similar to the kind encountered in Takanakapsaluk's narrative, i.e., obstacles meant to strike terror into one's heart and cause suffering, these exist, in such tribes as the Ojibwa and the Winnebago, only in the journey of the soul to spirit-land. In this connection the narrative from Kohl we have just mentioned is unusually interesting and instructive. All that is terrifying to the soul of a deceased person, as he makes his way along the road to spirit-land, is still there but it has no relevance for the living. The apparently dying hunter has no fear in his heart and the people he meets, supernatural beings and ghosts alike, are not fearful to behold nor fear-inspiring. On the contrary, they are sympathetic and helpful. Love and affection suffuse the whole scene. He is reprimanded by his father and uncle only because he has presumed, on his own and before his allotted time, to set a limit to his life and thus, in effect, to neglect his duty to his wife and children.

Manifestly an individual of an entirely different temperamental type has drawn this picture, one fundamentally different from the man who created the drama of the Eskimo shaman's journey to Takanakapsaluk or who formulated the Eskimo conception of the approach to the supernatural, to the spirit-deities or who pointed out the extent of the distance which separate the latter from man.

[15] J. G. Kohl, *Kitchi-Gami* (Bremen, 1851), pp. 276 ff.

But let us now stop and see how far we have progressed. We have discovered two types of people who can be considered to be more or less continuously religious. The one is so because he possesses a temperamental predisposition which frequently places him in the neurotic-epileptoid group. The other is so because he possesses a temperamental predisposition which emphasizes the limitations of man and the importance of what lies beyond human power. The latter is essentially an introvert and a philosopher and very rarely gives evidence of suffering from any fundamental psychical unbalance.

In addition to these two temperamental types, we have found another type represented by our Iglulik Eskimo, where there is little interest in religion *per se*. Individuals of this group accept passively the religious man's articulation of his experience. Such people at times fall into a vague scepticism. They can be said to have little inherent capacity for religion. They live primarily on the religious experience of others. This does not mean, however, that they never have any form of religious experience of their own.

To this group, likewise, belong those whose scepticism leads them, on occasion, to actually deny the powers and efficacy of a particular spirit-deity or god. They are not common, although by no means absent, in the simpler aboriginal societies. However, they are most frequently encountered in those aboriginal cultures where a class or caste organization exists such as in West and East Africa and Polynesia.

The vast majority of people in aboriginal civilizations belongs to this indifferently religious group. It cannot be sufficiently emphasized that the number of inherently religious individuals is always small. There are, indeed, many reasons why this should be so, not only in aboriginal societies, but, in fact, in all societies. If appearances

seem to belie this conclusion that is due to the fact that many individuals, as we have seen, find it expedient to behave, on many occasions, as though they really possessed a true religious temperament.

Moreover, it should not be forgotten that there are crises in almost every person's life, as in the life of the community and in the nature of the impingement of the physical environment upon man, which do tend to induce a subjective condition similar to that of the inherently religious individual. This is particularly so where a true psychical crisis is involved. Significantly enough, it is to the subjective condition of the typical Eskimo and Siberian shaman, i.e., of the individual who believes himself coerced by a spirit-deity, that an indifferently religious man seems to approximate at such times, rarely to the second of the truly religious temperamental types as exemplified by the Teton Dakota experience (cf. pp. 86-87 of this book).

The break-up of aboriginal cultures due to the impact of European civilization has furnished us with numerous examples of such secondary religious experiences, both on the part of an essentially religious temperament that has been stunted, and on the part of our intermittently religious temperament. These can be at times so intense as to lead to a fundamental change in a person's attitude toward religion, namely to a true, full and permanent conversion.

I have discussed and interpreted in detail one such case where our information was unusually good and detailed.[16] In all such instances we are dealing, basically, with temporarily disorganized individuals trying desperately to achieve some kind of psychical equilibrium and using every conceivable type of method, old and new, to

[16] *The Religious Experiences of an American Indian*, Eranos Jahrbuch XVIII (Zuerich, 1950), pp. 250-290.

do so. In the case just mentioned, from the Winnebago, it is a man of our second religious temperamental type with whom we are concerned. This man, John Rave by name, had become completely demoralized in consequence of the breakdown of his culture, although other factors were unquestionably also involved. It is highly instructive to notice how, although he describes the terrors and hallucinatory visions universally associated with our first type of truly religious individual, i.e., the typical Eskimo and Siberian shaman, he yet ends by attaining the ecstasy and euphoria which properly belong to his own special temperamental predisposition.

In the main, however, the breakdown of aboriginal cultures brings to the fore the intermittently religious individuals, for it is only such individuals who are willing to accept, without resistance, new solutions. Being, in a religious sense, fundamentally unanchored, they become most easily terrified and psychically disorganized. It is to these factors that we must ascribe the role played by collective hysteria in all the new religions that spring up on such occasions.

We find these new religions among all aboriginal peoples. Among the North American Indians they are best represented by the well-known Ghost Dance and in Melanesia by the so-called *Vailala Madness* and the *Taro Cult*, to mention only those which have been carefully studied. Williams,[17] in discussing the *Vailala Madness*, points out that there are three classes of people who are seized by the *jipari*, i.e., the shaking-fit, the *sine qua non* for this religion: those who fall into this condition apparently involuntarily; those who simply simulate the condition, and, lastly, those who voluntarily induce the

[17] F. H. Williams, *The Vailala Madness* Anthropology, Report IV (Port Moresby, 1920), and *Orokaiva Magic* (Oxford, 1928), pp. 1-100.

condition and apparently, for the time being at least, surrender themselves completely to it. The third group constitute the largest class. This is clearly composed of the intermittently religious people.

Under ordinary conditions, of course, we are not dealing with either personal crises of the kind illustrated by the Winnebago John Rave or with a more or less complete break-up of a culture. Yet, at all times, there must have been minor cultural crises in aboriginal societies where the intermittently religious individual obtained a secondary religious experience. All the evidence at our disposal—and it is quite voluminous—shows that, on such occasions, such a man either repeated mechanically the religious formulations devised by the truly religious man or attempted to induce in himself, with varying degrees of success, what he regarded as the proper subjective condition. The religious fasting-experiences of the American Indians furnish us with innumerable examples of just such behavior, although they have nothing, of course, to do with either specific personal or societal crises. The existence of such religiously non-susceptible persons is specifically recognized in many parts of aboriginal North America. Because of this fact, fasters, young and old, are often told what they are to expect.

But quite apart from personal and cultural crises, major or minor, there exist certain types of social and economic structures where, intermittently, even inherently non-religious temperaments have been seemingly overwhelmed by the atmosphere in which they find themselves and where such individuals undoubtedly obtain an experience approximating to that of a truly religious person. Such a situation arises not infrequently where, as in Africa and Polynesia, there exist well-developed rituals and a true priesthood and where, we know, many individuals with no religious predisposition

enter the priesthood because of the prestige connected with it and the many advantages, plus the "pecuniary" emoluments, the priesthood brings with it.

In both Africa and Polynesia the generally accepted religious theory was that a god must possess a man and that a man so possessed must be a properly qualified priest. The priest so possessed was thus simply a medium through whom a god spoke.

Here it is, of course, always difficult to determine when we are dealing with a simulated experience. The impression obtained from reading the published accounts suggests that even in Africa and Polynesia, where the religion, at least of the upper caste, was rigidly crystallized and where the higher priests, certainly, were frequently not selected for their temperamental religious predisposition, that even there, men, obviously of the most matter-of-fact type, were overwhelmed by the implications of what they were doing and of the place where they were functioning. Mariner[18] was consequently quite right when, in describing the performance of a Tongan priest, he insisted that often such an individual forces to the surface, "the deepest feelings of devotion of which he is susceptible, and by a voluntary act disposes his mind . . . to be powerfully affected: till at length what began by volition proceeds by involuntary effort and the whole mind and body become subjected to the overruling emotion."

Mariner's description of a specific religious performance is well-worth quoting at length. The Tongan priest is pictured as sitting in silence, his hands clasped and his eyes cast down—the stereotyped motor behavior for religious concentration. When he is asked questions, for he is supposed to convey a message from the deity who

[18] W. Mariner, *An Account of the Natives of the Tonga Islands,* edited by J. Martin (Edinburgh, 1827), Vol. I, p. 102.

is possessing him, his voice is low and its tone very much altered. "All this is done," so Mariner explains,[19]

> "without any apparent inward emotion or outward agitation; but on some occasions his countenance becomes fierce, and as it were, inflamed and his whole frame agitated with inward feeling; he is seized with a universal trembling; the perspiration breaks out on his forehead, and his lips, turning black are convulsed; at length, tears start in floods from his eyes, his breast heaves with great emotion, and his utterance is choked. These symptoms gradually subside. Before this paroxysm comes on, and after it is over, he often eats as much as four hungry men . . . The fit being now gone off, he remains for some time calm . . . Then (he) takes up a club . . . and (finally) strikes the ground . . . ; immediately the god leaves him, and he rises up and retires to the back of the ring among the people."

This is, assuredly, not the expression of a deeply religious person. I feel certain that our Caribou-Eskimo shaman, Igjugarjuk, would definitely have regarded our Tongan priest as extremely untrustworthy, if not a fraud. And it is actually difficult to decide in religious performances of this type whether we are dealing with a simulated experience or not. Only a detailed knowledge of the person concerned could possibly determine this for us.

Williams' discussion of the *jipari* of the Melanesian Orokaiva seems very much to the point here. He found a group of individuals who could resist the oncome of the *jipari-fit*, then give in to it and finally relinquish it. The Orokaiva themselves virtually admitted this, explaining that to some there was too much strain and discom-

[19] *Ibid.*

fort involved; that to others it was too much like hard work and, to still others, too tiresome and monotonous.

However, to properly understand the nature of the religious experience and the approach to the supernatural of the essentially intermittently religious and the definitely non-religious person, it is best to examine his behavior and his attitude where he is not actually attempting to behave, or being forced by custom and circumstances to behave, like a truly religious individual. Ethnological monographs and descriptions of aboriginal life by missionaries, administrators and travellers are full of examples illustrative of the attitude of peoples of just this temperamental type.

The experience of our indifferently religious individual must not be underestimated or neglected. But it should also be remembered that we are here almost always dealing with a man of action. What the psychical orientation of such an individual is we have already discussed in detail (this book pages 37-67 ff.). Although it is true that he is essentially indifferent to the claims and the stirrings of his inner self, he has such stirrings and he is aware of them and recognizes them. At times, indeed, they play an important role in his life.

Now how does such an individual, for instance, explain the nature of his relationship to a spirit-deity, granted that is, that he happens to be an individual who is at all articulate about such a matter? Let me give an illustration where we possess the requisite detailed and pertinent information. It comes from the Winnebago Indians. I shall quote the statement verbatim:[20]

> "On one occasion when I was on a drinking spree, I visited a lodge where I found a young

[20] *The Autobiography of a Winnebago Indian*, Univ. Calif. Publ. Am. Arch. and Ethn., (1920), Vol. XVI, pp. 410-411.

> woman with whom I was accustomed to joke (i.e., with whom I was on terms of the ritual joking-relationship) . . . I, therefore, began to joke with her after I arrived and had been given food to eat. However, one of the women (my 'aunt') present, interrupted me and said, 'Younger brother, your niece is really to be pitied just now (not joked with) for she is about to face death. She is about to be confined, and, always on such occasions she barely manages to escape death.' 'Well and good,' I replied, 'this time my niece is not going to suffer. Up above, in the heavens, there live four women, sisters, who bestowed their blessings upon me and told me that if ever I needed help they would grant it. To these I shall now make due offerings and, when my niece is about to be delivered, she too must ask them for help . . .' The woman thanked me (and I left).
>
> "Now all that I said was completely untrue. Some time after this I saw the woman (who had spoken to me) in town. 'Younger brother,' she exclaimed, 'your niece has just given birth to a child and she is in excellent condition, just as you claimed she would be.' On hearing this I was truly surprised. Perhaps I have really been blessed I thought, perhaps I am a holy man."

Here clearly the deity is essentially his effect, just as, we have seen, an object possesses *mana* when it works and does not possess it when it does not work. The example here given is particularly valuable because the Winnebago to whom it refers was well aware of the fact that the official priestly theory demanded that such powers as he claimed to possess could only be obtained if one felt the proper inward stirring. He himself specifically says so in another part of this same autobiography. But then he was fundamentally a non-religious and

matter-of-fact man, a pragmatist; things existed because they existed and were true because they happened. Theoretically his position was to let those who were interested in such matters explain why. In fact, so he would have contended, it was their business and duty to explain. He would accept what they said. Nevertheless, individuals of this temperamental type are often rigorous and logical thinkers and do often attempt explanations. These explanations are primarily of the cause-and-effect type or, perhaps stated more accurately, of effect-and-cause type. My Winnebago informant was such a person as his autobiography amply testifies.

Just as the non-religious and intermittently religious man is primarily a man of action and a pragmatist for whom an effect precedes a cause, so is the truly religious man primarily a "subjective idealist." In aboriginal societies, however, he, too, must be a man of action or, at least, behave like one. We have seen that he is constrained and impelled by his whole nature to concern himself with his subjective states, to ponder upon them, to analyze them, and to attempt to synthesize them. He attaches great importance both to the influence of his subjective states upon his actions and to the explanations he has developed. He insists on a description in terms of a cause-and-effect relation, never, however, in terms of an effect-and-cause one.

The sharpness with which this cause-and-effect relation is brought out differs markedly from the two basic types of truly religious temperament. Both clearly are thinkers. However, where we are dealing with individuals whose psychical unbalances are acute, where compulsion plays so large a part, whether more or less permanent or transient, where feeling is as important as thinking, there it might perhaps be best to say that such men are prone to analyze causes as such and effects as such and

leave the interaction between them blurred, although they are keenly aware that a nexus exists. It is exceedingly important to remember this fact.

On the other hand, where we are dealing with the second of our truly religious types, a causal nexus is specifically predicated. At times there is indeed a tendency to treat the object toward which the feeling is directed as if it were the cause of the feeling itself, that is, of the subjective condition. In the first type the object, the divine, the supernatural, is regarded as secondary. It is the feeling that individualizes it, that so-to-speak deifies it. In the second, we have just the reverse, and the divine is primary.

It will be seen at once that the intermittently religious individual, the pragmatist, actually wavers between these two contrasting attitudes and philosophies. This follows naturally from his whole orientation toward life.

Assuredly I do not have to emphasize what the clash of the two temperaments, the truly religious and the intermittently and non-religious, has meant in the history of religion; how the coordinating formulations of the first have permeated the activities and thinking of the latter; and how the activities and thinking of the second have continually disrupted these formulations. In fact, this disruption of the formulations of the truly religious man, expressed and implied, constitutes one of the main functions of our matter-of-fact man, of our man of action. However, although it is true that we frequently cannot understand many aspects of the formulations of the articulate religious thinker without due and proper regard for the activities of the non-religious individual, we cannot understand religion and religious experience at all except by studying and analyzing the ideas and the behavior of the truly religious man. To understand primi-

tive religions we must begin with his description and with his analysis of the religious experience.

Having now pointed out the presence and importance of certain psychological types in aboriginal societies, we can proceed to a description of the economic framework within which the man of action, the thinker, the religious and the non-religious man must function. It cannot be too strongly stressed that it is this framework which, in the last analysis, determines how these individuals are to function and which interpenetrates all their creations, giving them body, meaning and direction.

chapter five

THE ECONOMIC STRUCTURE AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

I REALIZE THAT TO SPEAK OF AN ECONOMIC STRUCTURE basic to all primitive peoples seems, on the face of it, preposterous, particularly if we visualize the fundamental differences which exist in the methods of food-production, the productive relations, the methods of exchange and the types of political organization which have arisen in connection with them. Yet in spite of these admittedly far-reaching differences, it is a commentary on the attitude and approach of contemporary social scientists and anthropologists that they have failed to notice those basic human and economic elements to be found, without exception, among all aboriginal tribes. It would be incorrect to say that they have not, in a mechanical

fashion to be sure, recognized the existence of these common basic economic elements. But it has obviously had no living implications for them. The fact is, unfortunately, that most social scientists rarely deal with human beings but only with the shadows they cast. This is apparent even when they are collecting autobiographies or making personality studies.

What these basic elements are I have already touched upon, but they bear repetition. They are the following: Irrespective of the type of political organization and the method of food-production, irrespective of whether society is socially stratified or unstratified, democratic or monarchical, or whether the food-economy is that of the food-gatherer, the hunter-fisher, the agriculturist or the pastoral-nomad, all aboriginal peoples accept the theory that every human being has the inalienable right to an irreducible minimum, consisting of adequate food, shelter and clothing. This irreducible minimum is an attribute of life on a par with the biological attributes of life. Being alive signifies not only that blood is coursing through a man's body but that he obtains the wherewithal to keep it coursing. Nowhere, let me repeat, does there exist a surplus of food or goods accumulated either by the community or by an individual with the specific object of disposing of it at a personal profit to himself, and nowhere have the essential and fundamental types of property developed those characteristics which we, in our civilization, regard as inseparably connected with the concept of personal and individual ownership. Before, however, we attempt to gauge the full significance of what I am here stating it will be best to describe the facts themselves more concretely.

As has already been pointed out, we must, from the beginning, divorce our minds completely of the notion that primitive peoples are so simple, mentally and emo-

tionally, that their demands are so modest, that living as they do in small settlements, a concept such as that of an irreducible minimum for all is but natural. Without entering into any ethical and philosophical disquisitions upon the subject, it can be claimed that it is indeed natural but not any more for aboriginal than for civilized peoples.

We cannot, in short, seek for the origin of such a doctrine and its existence everywhere in aboriginal society in any theory of the greater simplicity, mental and emotional, of primitive peoples. Since, as I have already pointed out, no correlation exists between this doctrine and a particular political or economic structure of society, the explanation must be sought elsewhere. We must first be certain, however, that it is not simply a theory. This can best be done by giving a few illustrations from peoples living on different levels of food-economy.

Let us begin with the food-gatherers and simple organized hunters. Among the Semang of the Malay peninsula, the conditions of life and the structure of society are such as hardly to favor any regard for another person's welfare. The group is small, consisting generally of parents, their grown children and their families. It must travel at least six miles every day to obtain its daily food. There is no organized political authority beyond the vaguely defined leadership of the older men. Tools are individually "owned." Shelter and clothing present no particular problem in the climate and surroundings in which they live. The food-supply, however, does, and it is precisely there that our minimum-requirement formula holds. Food is always shared within the group and even the harvest of the *durian* fruit-trees, which are individually "owned" and inherited from father to son, must be equally apportioned. A similar situation exists among the Bushman of South Africa where the food cached for an

individual family is generally recognized as personal property. Yet even this can be and is used by other families in distress, as long as the depositor is informed of it. Larger game animals are always the property of the community and their meat is distributed among the group. Among the Andamanese, according to Radcliffe-Brown,[1] this insistence that everyone must be provided with food and, consequently, help to obtain it is pushed to the point of stigmatizing laziness as definitely anti-social. Yet, and this is the important point, even if an individual evades his obligation he still will be given food although he will suffer a distinct loss of prestige.

If we turn to the more complexly organized hunting-fishing tribes we find the same attitude prevailing. Among the Greenland Eskimo, in spite of numerous developments that make definitely for personal ownership, in spite of the prominence of bitter personal rivalries and feuds, no one is permitted to suffer from hunger if that can possibly be prevented. There is a communal surplus from which the distressed individual may draw, and friend and opponent will always come to his aid. The situation among the northwest tribes of Canada is even more illuminating. There we find a highly complicated stratified society with special religious-ceremonial implications and an even more complicated theory of exchange and distribution of goods. The accumulation of wealth and the display of wealth takes on the most bizarre aspects. Yet neither the commoners, who were dependent upon the nobles for an opportunity of making a living, nor the slaves, who were owned by the nobles, were treated as chattels and had no status, ever suffered from lack of food, shelter or clothing. In this regard, slaves fared as well as the mass of the people.

[1] A. R. Radcliffe-Brown. *The Andaman Islanders* (Cambridge University, 1933), p. 50.

Naturally, of course, the treatment of slaves always carries special implications. Yet it should be remembered that slavery among primitive people, even where it was so highly developed as in aboriginal Africa, was quite distinct in its fundamental purposes from that which existed in the ancient major civilizations of Asia, Africa, and the Mediterranean.

The moment we leave the food-gathering and hunting-fishing tribes, the task of demonstrating the existence, in theory and practice, of our irreducible minimum formula, becomes progressively easier for we then find ourselves among tribes which, in the overwhelming number of instances, possess some form of clan or correlative type of organization where the assumption of an irreducible minimum for all is implicit. This certainly holds true, at least, for the clan proper.

One example will, consequently, suffice. Let us select the Maori about whom we have unusually good and detailed information. The Maori example, moreover, is particularly apt because, in a society such as theirs, where clans are not found, where caste distinctions of the most rigorous kind exist and where a ruling class has developed a highly sophisticated ideological superstructure in which the other groups do not share and with which, in fact, they can have no contact, in such a society we would expect little concern for the members of the lower caste. The sense of belonging to a common community was, however, so strong that it completely overrode the principle of caste stratification. Since the Maori have no clans the most reasonable explanation for this complete overriding of caste stratification and its accessory, the principle of primogeniture, is to be sought in the paramount influence of the principle of an irreducible minimum. Here, among the Maori, it has been elaborately organized and systematically articulated.

It is expressed in every aspect of their life. The chief, in fact, was simply the symbol of this principle. He, it was, who properly organized the obtaining of food, the crafts, and the distribution and exchange of goods. The food obtained was, in the main, the property of the village and to the village square was brought the catch of every individual participating. What was not eaten, was after the meal, placed in the communal village storehouse and, from it, food was taken as required. Moreover the share a person received bore no relation to his particular contribution but all shared alike, even those who could not participate, apart from unimportant special portions reserved for the sacred chiefs and priests.

Thus we have been brought to the question of cooperation. That it is cooperation which is largely instrumental in bringing about this guarantee of an irreducible minimum we know, but this does not answer the question of why the concept of the irreducible minimum should exist everywhere. Vague generalizations will not do, whether they are based on racial, psychological or ecological considerations.

It has not much meaning, for instance, to say with Malinowski, that "prescribed emergency behaviour is derived from the urge of self-preservation" or that "the duty of one person is inevitably the privilege of another; services rendered are boons received; gifts and tributes presented by one side can be demanded by the other." [2]

The correct explanation for what Malinowski is here describing is actually not difficult but it is voluminous and so interwoven with every other aspect of primitive man's life that it should, properly speaking, not be attempted until the end of our discussion.

Yet a few very general remarks are not out of place

[2] Cf. his introduction to H. I. Hogbin, *Law and Order in Polynesia* (London, 1934), pp. XXXVII and XXXIII.

here. Malinowski, in his postulation of the principle of reciprocity as basic to an understanding of behavior in primitive communities, has, so to speak, skirted what is unquestionably the correct answer or, at least, part of it. His formulation, however, is so colored by his biological outlook and his whole ideological position that the solution of the problem has not been materially advanced by him.[3] It is, after all, a purely formalistic and mystical-mechanistic manner of looking at the problem, to speak of the duty of one person containing as its completion the privilege of another, of services rendered becoming boons received, and gifts presented having as a necessary corollary gifts demanded. Discrete and distinct individuals are here involved, a giver and a receiver. Types of discreteness there may be and there undoubtedly are, due to specific secondarily imposed cultural stipulations. The limiting condition, however, is not a logical category like the principle of reciprocity but other discrete individuals and a specific physical and social environment. This idea of the discreteness of an individual is not an inference of the ethnologist but a fact consistently stressed in all primitive systems of education.

Discreteness must not be confused with isolation. Every individual, it goes without saying, is fitted into a frame of reference from the moment he is born, the frame of reference being the family and group to which he belongs, and the outside world. This implies identification or, better, intimacy with both. On the other hand the awareness of discreteness does exclude identification and limits intimacy. It is, therefore, not too much to say that, from early childhood on, an interplay takes place between the forces making for discreteness and for

[3] Although far better formulated, I feel that M. Mauss likewise is still only skirting the correct answer in his famous *Essai sur le Don*, L'Année sociologique (Paris, 1924).

identification. Both, in fact, possess their own social formulations. Broadly speaking, discreteness means the realization of distances between individuals, and the establishment of degrees of propinquity expressing itself outwardly in manners and etiquette and in rules of propriety. Identification, on the other hand, means the establishment and organization of ties and intimacies and this expresses itself in the postulation of a graded series of obligations and privileges.

What, however, it may be asked, has the acceptance of our irreducible minimum to do with all this? With its origin perhaps nothing, with its persistence, a good deal. The persistence of the theory of an irreducible minimum throughout all aboriginal societies, irrespective of their structure, is due to the interlocking functioning of the social technique for maintaining distance and that for binding individuals together. This is the determining factor not only in the establishment and authentication of an irreducible minimum but in the establishment and authentication of numerous other social-economic constructs. Obviously, stated in this abstract way, the bearing of these social techniques on our particular problem seems somewhat vague. It will, however, be clearer and acquire a more concrete significance as we proceed.

Let us now turn to the second of the traits of all aboriginal cultures, the non-profit disposition of a surplus. This is so intimately bound up with the concepts of property, wealth, distribution and exchange that they will all have, to a certain extent, to be discussed together.

Among the simpler food-gatherers there is generally no surplus. Some system of distribution and exchange of goods exists, however, everywhere and it is well to begin with the fundamental concepts that underlie them. To understand them we must be careful to divest ourselves of all notions derived from our own economic life.

Let us begin with distribution. We must distinguish carefully, at the outset, between distribution which is, at bottom, really the apportionment of the available supplies and the distribution of a surplus. The first applies mainly to food and only, in a restricted sense, to manufactured articles. Here the important fact to remember is that the idea of withholding food from anyone for any reason whatsoever, no matter what the status of the individual, what crime against the community he may have committed or how unwilling to work he may be, is, in a primitive community, simply unthinkable. It would be tantamount to denying his existence. What we are dealing with here, among the simpler civilizations, is thus the distribution of objects that never belonged to any one, strictly speaking, not even to the community.

The situation is quite different where we are dealing with a surplus not of food but of commodities, whether it is that of an individual or even of the community as such. This has gone through the stage of having become property and of having liens connected with it. Yet a surplus never constitutes true property, for all property must possess a title establishing the right of ownership as well as the right of transfer. This a surplus of commodities never possesses among primitive peoples. It is not a "democratic demand" [4] insisting that no man enjoy more than his neighbor which compels a man to distribute his surplus. The surplus never has had any of the attributes of property. Its distribution is simply apportionment of the same order as that which takes place in the case of food. Why the notion of profiting from the distribution of a surplus never enters is consequently perfectly clear. Profit whether it means an increase in actual wealth or in prestige and status is a concept con-

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[4] Thurnwald, *op. cit.*, p. 176.

nected only with what can be transferred and transference refers only to property. To the multiple implications of property we must now, accordingly, turn. If much of the discussion which follows concerns itself with what we customarily call law, that is only natural. Law and the legal structure of a people are intimately bound up with the economic structure everywhere but particularly among aboriginal peoples.

Primitive man had a very clear perception of the nature of legal distinctions and niceties and we are not reading any European notions into a treatment of property by insisting that he is fully aware of its various constituents and possibly even of the theory underlying them. He is, in his way, as careful to define person, object, transaction, use, as a punctilious lawyer and legal theorist might be. In fact the whole elaborate technique for establishing and maintaining distance and for organizing and authenticating degrees of intimacy actually constitutes a series of legal distinctions.

Now the concept of *person* in aboriginal society involves a number of definite things. This is not due to any mystical or philosphical interest on the natives' part, but flows from the purely practical consideration that they wish to know with whom they are dealing and the nature of that person's responsibility. In civilizations where a belief in reincarnation, ancestor-identification, transformation, multiple souls, etc., is involved in the concept of personality, the nature of an individual's responsibility for a given act is of paramount importance. One example, from the writer's own experience, will illustrate this latter point clearly.

When studying the Winnebago Indians of Wisconsin and Nebraska he wished to purchase a sacred bundle belonging to a certain Indian. It had become a veritable white elephant for the Indian and, although he natu-

rally was somewhat terrified at the thought, he was, nevertheless, quite willing to dispose of it. Theoretically, he had a right to do what he wished with it; practically, there were difficulties. Public opinion, as well as the whole problem of what constituted property rights, particularly whether this extended to alienation of a piece of property amounting to its absolute extinction as far as the tribe was concerned, all this seemed to make the sale impossible. How then did he surmount these obstacles? By the simple, if rather unusual, device of getting himself drunk and thus freeing himself from the type of responsibility he possessed when sober. There was no question of ethical responsibility involved here but simply the matter of who he was and with what part of his personality the writer was dealing. That affected the whole legality of the purchase as well as the action that could be taken against the Indian.

But the distinctions we must make have only begun. As we pointed out above, a person is viewed in two contrasting aspects, as a discrete entity or as a connected one. In his first capacity he plays a role in the concept of property, primarily in connection with the utilization of an object and its transferability. In the second, he plays a role in every aspect of the concept, but more particularly in connection with the establishment of the right of ownership and its authentication and validation. In this second role he represents fundamentally a legal fiction, in the sense that he must always act with reference to a cultural framework from which he has been secondarily segregated. Consequently when he claims to be the owner of a given object, we must know whether he, in person, is to be defined as owner, whether he is only symbolically such, whether he is a surrogate or substitute of the *de facto* possessor or, finally, whether he is simply a trustee, temporarily or permanently. This is, by no

means, all. Innumerable refinements may exist. For instance, as a surrogate or substitute for another person, he may be a real substitute or a fictional one, and so on. Moreover his definition as the *de facto* owner, the symbolical owner, the surrogate-substitute or the trustee, must be validated and authenticated publicly or semi-publicly by a precise and elaborate "documentation." Naturally the nature and extent of this documentation varies from tribe to tribe. But it always exists.

Having thus defined person, the primitive lawyer turns to the examination of what constitute things, particularly from the point of view of whether they can or cannot be possessed or owned. It is imperative to make a clear distinction between possession and ownership. Anything and everything can be possessed. Possession means simply the physical control of a thing. As such, an object has no status. It can never become part of a transaction unless it is first transformed into an object owned. Ownership means an authenticated right to possession of an object, a right it derives either because a person has actually manufactured it or had it transferred to him in proper fashion. Certain things can only be possessed, like food, the house in which you live, the clothing on your back. Other things can only be owned, like tools. Apart from those things belonging to the irreducible minimum, everything possessed can be given the status of ownership. This depends entirely upon the type of society and the historical developments within the tribe. The reverse, however, is not true. Things owned never become transformed into things simply possessed.

Ownership involves, first of all, the right to the use of all the potentialities of an object legally in your possession, as well as to all the privileges and emoluments connected with it in so far as no restrictions were imposed upon its use when it was acquired. Obviously in the case

of those things which a man has personally manufactured for his immediate needs and which he is using there are few if any restrictions. For those things, however, which he has acquired, the restrictions may, at times, be so great that, from our point of view, he hardly seems to own them at all. That would naturally follow from what we have said above concerning the actuality of the putative owner.

Secondly, ownership involves the right to transfer such an object to some one else. But this right of transfer is among aboriginal peoples not the simple thing it is with us. On the contrary, it perhaps represents the most intricate aspect of all primitive economics, as has been frequently pointed out. Transference may, in fact, be the primary condition on which an object is acquired and which was uppermost in the minds of both the seller and the recipient. Indeed, the whole technique of transference may take the form of an elaborate ritual which may actually constitute the reason for its desirability in the first instance. This may, in fact, represent the only use to which it is put. Such transference is exceedingly common among many primitive peoples and the privileges, emoluments and prestige accruing therefrom are enormous. We have only to think of the famous potlatch ceremonies of the Northwest Coast of North America and the *kula* of the Trobriand Islands, so brilliantly described by Malinowski, and its cognates among other Melanesian tribes. There are, naturally, all types of transfer as we shall see later. In no case, however, has an owner the right, in the transfer, to liquidate permanently the properties of an object.

So much then for the rights of the owner. We must now turn to his obligations. Obviously, from what has already been indicated, there can be no such thing among primitive people as property rights apart from

property obligations. Yet we must be very careful not to think of rights and obligations as inherently complementary, something flowing either from basic human-ethical urges or purely vegetative-organic needs, as certain theorists have done. Obligations are implied in the very notion of property. They represent another of the multifarious restrictions inhering in primitive man's understanding of the function of property: *it must serve.*

The possession of property thus entails two primary obligations: first, a formal authentication and validation of ownership and second, putting it to use.

This validation is simple enough for articles that a person has himself manufactured. His word is sufficient. But for everything that he has inherited or that he has bought he must have a title. A title can consist of a number of things—a name, a song, a legend recounting the origin of the object in question, or what not. Owing to the very involved nature of a title at times there is often ample room for disputes. This is particularly true of such areas as the northwest coast of North America and, indeed, of all socially stratified societies. In general, however, title is not difficult to establish.

A title in primitive societies, is, of course, not simply a proof of ownership to be presented to the world once and for all and then placed in a strongbox. It is infinitely more for, after a manner, it is regarded as an essential part of the actual property itself and must, like the actual material object, be exhibited at stated occasions and in a proper religious or ritualistic setting. This repeated exhibition and authentication of a title is not due to any demand based on doubts as to its validity but to the fact that property, in addition to the pleasure one has in its possession and the practical, personal advantages that flow from it, has definite prestige and status value, exactly as among us. And, as among our *nouveaux*

riches, this is exploited to the utmost and expressed in much the same manner—by braggadocio, ostentatious display, snobbery, and conspicuous waste. The implications behind it are, however, of an utterly different kind among primitive peoples than among ourselves, for there authentication is a prescribed type of behavior for a particular occasion and has a specific objective.

These accessories to the validation of the right to ownership of an object, corporeal or incorporeal, hide, at times, the fact that a legal title to an object is here to be established or reaffirmed and that it is an owner's obligation to do so if he wishes the world to accept or pay any attention to his proprietary rights. Yet, however authentic and acceptable this validation may be, it would, in actuality, mean little if an owner failed to exercise his proprietary rights. Property, by definition, for aboriginal man is something that must be used, the nature of its use to be determined by its manifest purpose, and by prescription. Clearly it is not always easy to state what constitutes a proper use and at what particular moment or by what particular action a legitimately owned article falls into the category of one no longer being used. Here the differences of opinion are inevitable. In the last analysis they are settled by pressure, private, semipublic or public, forcing the adoption of a particular interpretation.

Since it will clarify the concept of use to discover what constitutes the category of non-use let us take two examples illustrating the latter from instances which came under the writer's personal observation. The first case dealt with personal property where the title to possession was being questioned. It concerned a man who owned a number of horses which he not only was not using, but which he refused to sell and which he allowed no one else to use. The horses were, in fact, permitted to run

wild. Nothing was done about the matter but when, subsequently, he was murdered, this fact was used to indicate the utterly anti-social and wicked nature of his activities. He was depriving property, it was contended, of all its characteristics and functions, its use, its validation and its right to circulation. He had not only allowed these things to happen; he had constrained them to happen. He had, in fact, threatened to kill anyone who tried to prevent them from happening. From every point of view, according to Indian notions, he deserved to die. Nevertheless, if this man's rights to the horses had become extinguished theoretically, this meant little more than that, if they were forcibly seized, he had no redress except to assure those who had seized them that, if they were returned, he would permit them to function properly.

Such cases were common among all primitive peoples and, while the question of how a theoretical loss of title could be converted into a *de facto* one was solved in different ways depending upon the particular tribe in which it occurred and, naturally, upon the nature of the property and the title involved, the decisive factor in every case was whether the property in question was or was not being used and whether or not its proper functioning was being prevented.

It is upon this latter point that the second example I shall give hinges completely. The question involved was the right of a man to dispose of a so-called war-bundle. We mentioned a similar case before. The conditions here, however, were quite different. In the first instance (this book page 114) the owner was attempting to have the war-bundle function to his best ability. In the second instance, the one now to be discussed, he was not himself using it and had publicly signified that he would not do so by joining a religion which denied its efficacy.

However, with his consent, the bundle was being used by properly qualified individuals. Suddenly he decided to dispose of it. His ownership was questioned by no one. In fact, every time the ceremony connected with it was given, it was being validated. His right to transfer it was also not impugned, although certain restrictions in this regard had always been tacitly assumed.

Of the numerous problems that arose upon his frank declaration that he wished to dispose of the war-bundle, the only one that concerns us here is this: had he lost the rights he possessed and if so when and why? The answer seems to have been the following. He had not lost his title to the bundle. That belonged to him as long as he formally transferred it so someone else could use it, and this he had done. It had not, obviously, lost its function, for it was being used. If he demanded its return, it might even be returned to him even though his religious affiliations were well known. However, since he had declared that he was going to dispose of it in such fashion that its proper functioning would be forever destroyed, whereas there were individuals in the tribe who were willing to guarantee its continued and proper use, all his rights were for the moment in abeyance. They were not lost.

The reaction of the owner, an exceedingly upright man and a person of keen intelligence with a strong social conscience, was exceedingly interesting. He insisted upon all his rights and even advanced the argument that, quite apart from the question of his rights, the fate that had overtaken his people proved that the bundle had lost its efficacy and use. He claimed, in fact, that its continued use was actually detrimental to the tribe, an attitude reflecting the teachings of the new religion which he had adopted. Yet, in the end, he capitulated, basing his capitulation on the argument that since the war-bundle

had no significance unless it was properly used, his equity in it became extinguished the moment he joined the new religion which forbade its use. This decision was in strict accordance with the older traditional view of the main function of property and it is precisely in times of stress and crisis that it is tested.

The other problem broached by the owner of the bundle, namely, when does an article or object or ceremony lose its efficacy, that is, when does even its proper use have no significance, that, too, is vital to an understanding of the many implications inhering in primitive man's concept of property. It lies at the basis of the well known discarding of fetishes in West Africa and assumes tremendous importance in the study of the forces that make for change. As pointed out in connection with a previous example, an object as fundamental to Winnebago life as a sacred bundle can be liquidated, with comparatively little protest and by means of a threadbare fiction, in times of crisis and adjustment when the costs of having it function are completely out of proportion to the uses to which it can be put and the advantages that accrue to an individual from possessing it.

All we have said above about use and non-use, makes it quite clear that the end for which an object is designed and the degree to which this end is attained, gives it its economic and legal limits, restricts the behavior of an individual towards it and, at bottom, defines the status of his ownership.

Under such conditions property can rarely, if ever, become a mere commodity, a lifeless thing or an object over which a man possesses complete and unrestricted control, something which is always at one's beck and call and which is subject to one's every caprice. In other words, there can exist no commodity fetishism as among us. Fictions connected with property exist, we have seen,

in bewildering profusion among aboriginal peoples, just as do symbolic activities. But they must not, any more than the anthropomorphic phraseology in which the relations subsisting between an owner and the object he owns, be allowed to disguise the basic notions underlying the whole concept of property.

We come now to the last of the salient traits of property, its transferability and the obligation of an owner to permit it. Certain aspects of transference we have already discussed.

I am using transfer, for the moment, to cover everything included under the notion of exchange, purchase, sale, borrowing and gift. However, before we enter into an analysis of the concept of transfer itself, we must refer briefly to a characteristic element in the notion of property to which we have referred only incidentally so far, namely the fact that primitive man is somewhat obsessed by its transitory and fluctuating nature and he is continually attempting to convert this transitory and changing condition to a permanent and static one. This is, of course, only natural, just as it was but natural that he very rarely succeeded. All the conditions in aboriginal society were against him, although they were more favorable to the possibility of such a conversion in stratified agricultural societies than in other cases.

Permanence has, we know, always been a fiction used, since the early days of Egyptian and Sumerian civilizations, by special groups for special purposes. It required a type of economic structure, such as that which prevailed in these countries after about 3500 B.C., to give that fiction any degree of verisimilitude and permit its successful indoctrination. Such a type of economic structure simply did not exist among aboriginal peoples and while there were not a few individuals who, in validating their titles to possession, talked in terms reminiscent of

later authoritarian rulers, everyone knew that they were dealing with fictions, that these individuals, were, on such occasions, actors in a drama in which they had a specific part to play.

In aboriginal societies, to express the matter abstractly, the recognition that "all things flow" was never lost sight of and any action or theory that denied this manifest fact had little chance of being accepted. But "flow," movement, to continue our image, may mean a number of things. It need not be "linear" or presuppose that what has once passed will never return again as the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, who first enunciated this doctrine for Western Europe, taught. The flux could, on the contrary, be conceived of as "circular" and cyclical. Property would then, for instance, pass from one person to another within a definitely circumscribed space and, after making the circuit, either return to the person, or his proxy, from whom it had originally started. Or, again, it might never return to the original owner but remain, nevertheless, within this definitely circumscribed space, say the clan or the village or the tribe.

Such, stated schematically of course, is precisely the concept that underlies the whole theory of aboriginal exchange. It is not to be interpreted as a philosophical conception constructed *ad hoc*. In primitive man's view, the end for which a tool is designed and the success with which it achieves that end is part and parcel of the tool. And when, in addition, one remembers his concept of personality, the various meanings of ownership and the whole vast network of implications involved in the techniques for establishing degrees of distance and recognizing degrees of intimacy, then it must be patent that movement is a verifiable fact, inherent in the structure of all primitive societies. This movement is not the ex-

pression of a philosophy which aboriginal man has devised, nor a viewpoint reflecting a certain kind of thinking according to which he acts, but, to the contrary, the philosophy reflects the actual conditions of life.

But movement does not exist for its own sake. There must be something that moves; it must move with reference to certain points and it must move in a certain direction. The something that moves is property. It is at this point that we may properly begin our detailed discussion of transfer and exchange.

The statement made on a foregoing page that it was one of the acknowledged rights of the owner of property to transfer it, will now have become clear. Property is simply inextricably enmeshed in this movement of life. The points of reference to which it moves are the individuals between whom prescribed distances and intimacies exist. The direction in which it moves depends upon a large number of factors to which we shall presently refer.

The moment we clearly realize this essentially compulsory movement of property—compulsory because it is set in a dynamic framework and is the mechanism by which certain fixed relationships between individuals are visualized and authenticated—then a number of traits of the economic life of primitive people, which have always sorely troubled investigators, become clear. Then we understand, among other things, why the notion of profit, in our sense of the term, does not exist and why the value of property becomes enhanced as it passes from one person to another. One does not profit from a sale that is, strictly speaking, not a sale at all, and from an activity imposed from without. One can, however, gain status or prestige therefrom. Indeed that is about all one can gain. Similarly, the value-enhancement an object acquires in transit does not connote what, among us,

constitutes a rise in price, but means, again, simply an increase in status or prestige.

From our point of view this is, of course, cancelling the whole purpose of a transfer of property. Why transfer it then? The answer is that one generally must, either because the conditions upon which it was obtained compel its eventual transfer or because its transfer is often of greater prestige value than its retention.

This secondary characteristic of transfer among primitive peoples has frequently led ethnological theorists to insist that what they call the economic motive is far outweighed by the social one, such as the desire for prestige and status. In general, the tendency has been to speak of all aspects of primitive economics connected with transfer, barter and purchase, as if their main function was to serve as an outlet for the expression of specific human emotions and as if there was not a rigorous restriction of purely personal activity in such matters. It is difficult to understand how Thurnwald, for instance, can possibly permit himself to say that "The natural man conducts his economics according to his own judgment of what is right and prudent," or that Malinowski can so completely mistake the purely accessory accompaniments of the Trobriand Island system of exchange, which he has so well described, as to say that *noblesse oblige* is the social norm regulating behavior. Fortune, although he, too, speaks of the non-utilitarian character of the *Kula* institution, and the love of exchange being "one of the great characters of Melanesian culture," [5] nevertheless realizes clearly that this overdevelopment of exchange is founded on utility, that it is something left over after the utilitarian purpose of the exchange has been accom-

[5] Reo Fortune, *Sorcerers of Dobu* (New York, 1931), pp. 205-206.

plished. His description of this utilitarian purpose deserves full quotation:

> "Necessary utilitarian exchange obtains in the *Kula* ring. It is all done without direct barter. An expedition going out to seek ornamental valuables, e.g., a Dobuan canoe going to the Trobriands to seek armshells, takes large quantities of sage—representing solid unremitting work by all the families of the men who are the crew of the canoe. This sage they offer as a present to their Trobriand hosts from whom they desire armshells. The armshells are given them some days later as are also some of the special Trobriand products. There is often fair equivalence between the present given by guest to host, and that returned from host to guest some days later. But no haggling or questioning of equivalence is permitted. The armshell is, of course, given on credit and must be repaid some months later by a spondylus shell necklace." [6]

He is likewise quite right when he contrasts the few days' credit elapsing between the present and the counter-present of utilities with the far longer credit involved in connection with the non-utilitarian exchange of ornaments. But his statement that "the method of utilitarian exchange flows from a mental concentration on the non-utilitarian exchanges of ornaments" [7] represents the common ideological misconception of most anthropologists.

The interchange of goods Fortune here describes, and this holds equally well for the *Kula* of the Trobriand Islands and the potlatch of the Indians of the Northwest Coast of Canada, cannot be properly or correctly under-

[6] *Op. cit.*, p. 208.
[7] *Ibid.*

stood simply in terms of traditional societal conditioning or vague sociological laws. We are dealing here with a well-thought-out plan of economic action. How clearly thought out such an action can be is beautifully and convincingly brought out by J. H. Driberg in *The Savage As He Really Is*[8] in connection with the economic interaction of five African tribes of the Eastern Sudan-Uganda frontier. The tribes in question are the hillmen *Didinga*, the semi-hillmen *Tirangori* and *Kokir*, the plainsmen *Acholi* and the hillmen *Dodoth* who have been driven by tribal wars to live in the plains. But it is best to quote Driberg directly:[9]

> The *Acholi* are agricultural by virtue of their natural environment: the *Dodoth* remain a pastoral people despite the change in their environment, both because the change is too recent to have affected their culture and because their plains are arid and unproductive. The *Didinga* are primarily pastoral, but also practise agriculture owing to the favourable climate and soil of their mountains. The *Kokir* combine agriculture and animal husbandry, as do the people of *Tirangori*, more attention being given to agriculture.
>
> Taking the *Didinga* as the pivot let us examine their economic interactions. The *Didinga* are rich in cattle, but being poor in sheep and goats wish to increase their number. The *Kokir* want goats, and the people of *Tirangori*, who lost the bulk of their cattle through war and disease, want cattle but have an unlimited supply of sheep and goats. Owing to geographical and political circumstances the *Didinga* cannot trade with the people of *Tirangori* direct, and this give the *Kokir* the opportunity which they want. They accordingly buy *Didinga*

[8] (London, 1929), pp. 25-29.
[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 26-29.

cows for the price of 28 goats each, though they want goats themselves and do not want cattle. But in this they only play the part of middlemen and take the middleman's reward, for the cow which they buy from the *Didinga* they sell without delay to the people of *Tirangori* for 60 goats. All the parties are accordingly satisfied, and ultimately get what each wants.

But the *Kokir* even by this method cannot supply the *Didinga* with sufficient goats: for the *Didinga* want them not only for their own use, but also for re-export. Moreover, the *Didinga* do not want to limit their trade to the *Kokir* alone, as the *Kokir* cannot supply them with all the commodities which they need. Besides goats, they require metal weapons and implements—spears, axes, hoes, and bracelets—as they have no skill themselves in metal work. These they must obtain from the *Acholi*, and in return they offer the *Acholi* goats (hence the large number which they have to import), ostrich feathers and eggs, and ochre.

Leaving the *Acholi* for a moment let us look south. Here we have the *Dodoth* who require grain, as they do not grow it themselves but have acquired a taste for it since they migrated from their mountains. The *Dodoth* can offer sheep in exchange. The *Didinga* provide the grain. Normally they can supply the *Dodoth* from their own annual surplus, but in bad seasons they have to import grain from the *Acholi* for the purpose. But this means that they have to import grain every year from the *Acholi* whether they want it or not in order to keep their market, as the *Dodoth* can give the *Acholi* all that the *Didinga* offer, and unless the *Didinga* assure them of a regular market the *Acholi* would trade with the *Dodoth* direct. The *Didinga* as middlemen cannot risk this

contingency as they would sacrifice their own profits.

The upshot of it all is that the *Didinga* import grain from the *Acholi* for re-export in order that they may get goats from the *Dodoth*. They also import more goats from the *Kokir* than they need for their own use in order that they may re-export them to the *Acholi* as a set-off against the metal manufactures with which the *Acholi* alone can supply them. They take elaborate precautions to prevent the *Dodoth* short-circuiting them by maintaining an unnecessary trade in grain with the *Acholi*, and in the process the two middlemen, the *Kokir* and the *Didinga*, make quite a good profit every year.

What apparently Fortune, Malinowski and Thurnwald seem to have failed properly to understand and stress is that one of the primary roles, if, indeed, it is not actually the primary,[10] of a transfer and exchange is to visualize, dramatize and authenticate the existence of certain fixed relations subsisting between specific people and that this relationship has a "monetary" value. The actual reaffirmation of this relationship may take an exceedingly short time and the non-material emoluments flowing from it a very long time. That is, after all, true of every type of exchange and transfer. It is an unjustifiable procedure to relegate the utilitarian aspect of a transfer among primitive peoples to a secondary position because of the richness and the duration of its non-utilitarian accessories, just as unjustifiable as it would be to do the same in our own civilization. Are we to judge of the relative importance of a modern business transaction on the basis of the time spent in actually signing a

[10] There are, of course, all kinds of complications and ramifications, particularly where we are dealing with so-called "international" trade, as in the case of the Trobriand and Dobu Islanders.

transfer as compared with that spent in entertaining before and after the signing? Yet it is this exceedingly simple point that has been misunderstood and distorted.

We have next to consider the third element in the movement of an object that is owned, namely its direction. Here we are confronted by a multitude of problems. The fundamental one is to determine the extent to which this movement has been rigidly fixed by tradition and the extent to which this, in turn, is dependent upon the political-social structure of a given society. In actuality, of course, the economic primary needs supersede all others and no traditionally imposed movement of property, no state-structure, would long survive among primitive peoples, if these needs were seriously affected. The movement of property is consequently always subordinated to these primary needs. The irreducible minimum must be guaranteed, but once this is attained the utilitarian exchange of articles goes its own way. Frequently the traditional movement of property holds an almost tyrannical sway. But one thing is definite: personally willed exchange for its own sake never takes place. That is a fiction of the anthropologists.

Sometimes, however, where particular conditions such as the inability of a given territory to support the population exists, the traditional movement is adjusted to the special needs of a population. In the resulting conflict, especially where there is a clan organization, there may be a bewildering intermingling of the two. It is this intermingling which gives the *kula,* all its contradictory aspects. Let us, for instance, revert again to the Dobu Islanders. There we apparently find the strange economic phenomenon that one subgroup takes armshells to its area of production and another subgroup takes spondylus shell necklaces to its area of production. This is equivalent to taking coals to Newcastle, as Fortune correctly

observes. On the face of it nothing could demonstrate the non-economical character of the *kula* more than this. In a rational economic exchange one would expect that each subgroup would export its surplus. Nevertheless, in spite of this initial contradiction of the fundamental nature of a true economic exchange, the subsequent movement of the mutually desired objects rights this non-rational exchange and, at the end of a given period, both subgroups are in possession of the articles they want.

How are we to explain this? Fortune has to fall back on a kind of *deus ex machina*, a love of exchange. Yet the explanation is simple. The non-utilitarian exchange which has piled up each article in its actual center of production, represents the traditional movement of property. Here among the Dobu Islanders it has come into conflict with the mechanism necessary to secure for the inhabitants their primary needs. The traditional movement, largely non-utilitarian in the narrow economic sense of the term, must give way and be bent to serve these purely economic ends.

A situation comparable to that which prevails in the western Pacific, exists among the Indians of the northwest coast of North America, that is, from the point of view of the conflict between a traditional movement, largely non-utilitarian, and the presence of disrupting utilitarian demands. In the main, however, particularly in non-stratified clan societies, the traditional movement of property rules supreme and the exchange of objects becomes essentially a kind of courtesy currency.

A pertinent question now arises: how much of one's property is caught in this traditional movement and how much is "free," that is, strictly personal in our sense of the term? The answer must be none, except the actual food one needs for immediate sustenance, the implements and utensils necessary for securing this food, the

clothing on one's back and the house in which one lives, in short, the irreducible minimum. But, even in the case of implements and utensils, there are restrictions. They must all be loaned when a demand is made for them. In a sense, this holds for much of your clothing and the right to stay in your house. The demand naturally must be a reasonable one. It is this well-authenticated fact that has led many observers to postulate hospitality and an almost irrational kind of generosity as a trait *par excellence* of all aboriginal cultures.

Nothing, of course, is farther from the truth. There is no such thing there as a free gift. A free gift would imply that value inheres specifically in the object given. But such a conception is essentially foreign to aboriginal societies. Even where a type of "currency" has developed, this currency has adhesions quite different from those which we connect with money. It is not the article that passes from person to person that has value, but the persons through whom it passes and the actual act of passage with all their implications, primary and secondary. Not the article, but the needs of the man asking for it and, of course, the needs of the owner are relevant. Seen from this angle, borrowing, too, is one of the many aspects of the traditional movement in which all property is enmeshed. That purchase belongs to the same movement is self-evident in spite of all its numerous and intricate secondary developments.

It is in the light of all that we have pointed out above that we shall now deal with that aspect of the economic structure of primitive peoples which differs so markedly from our own, namely the conception of wealth.

Wealth, in our sense of the term, cannot possibly exist, for our conception of wealth is connected with money as it functions in stratified societies and authoritarian police-states where its primary special function is the

purpose of enabling an individual to live much better than the vast majority of his fellowmen, to enjoy special privileges and to free him from most of the drudgery and hardship involved in providing food for himself and his family. This he can only do if he can develop methods for obtaining power over other individuals and exerting pressure over society.

Certain of these aspects of wealth are to be found in all aboriginal societies. In fact, in every group, attempts are continually being made by the medicine-men and the priests to free themselves from the drudgery of securing food and to concentrate in their hands whatever wealth they can, in order to exact privileges and obtain this power over others.

What methods are employed, physical and psychological, will be brought out in the next chapter. The closest they come to succeeding is in Africa. However, Africa apart from certain limited sections can only by courtesy be termed aboriginal. The reason for this failure is simple. The structure of aboriginal society, particularly the concept of the irreducible minimum and the nature and concept of power is against them.

Wealth functions quite differently there. Since all property, with the exceptions noted before, must be in motion continually and a surplus must be distributed rapidly, the emoluments flowing from it are adjusted to certain basic facts and necessities. In consequence, the social aspects of wealth, the attaining of prestige and of status forge to the front.

This prominence of the social aspects of wealth is, consequently, due to the fact that, since wealth cannot be used to seize power, no other outlet is open to it. One of the most important by-products of this dominance of the social functions of wealth is to stimulate the expression of emotional-social attitudes that, on the face of

things, are irrational and certainly non-utilitarian. It should be remembered, however, that these expressions are not spontaneous. They are obligatory and stereotyped. A man does not behave in the superlatively arrogant fashion of the Kwakiutl Indians of Vancouver Island because he has suddenly become irrational when engaged in what would among us be a purely business transaction, but because he is, by tradition, supposed to behave in that manner. Similarly a man is not overwhelmed by the sense of his unimportance and worthlessness, as among the Winnebago, because uncontrollable irrational urges are overwhelming him but because, in the last analysis, that is the proper way to behave.

This brings us, of course, to the question of the extent to which magical and religious motives i.e., apparently completely uneconomic ones, lead to the actual destruction of wealth, even to the destruction of necessary foodstuffs. This is not easy to evaluate. In all cases of this kind we must first be certain that we are dealing with a fact and not with a theory and, if the facts are indisputable, whether it is a surplus of goods that is so destroyed or the capital and, if it is the capital, whether it is not replaced afterwards. If, for instance, it is the latter and, in such cases it evidently always is, the magical and religious beliefs have performed a useful social-economic function. The theft and even destruction of goods so common among primitive peoples in connection with funeral rites, with initiation into ceremonies and on numerous other occasions, then actually serve as methods of distribution. This is particularly true in Africa and parts of Melanesia. It is absent nowhere. Why so many anthropologists do not realize what economists have long known, that a secondary religious and even magical motivation has frequently been grafted on to a purely economic activity, it is somewhat difficult to understand. At

bottom, their attitude must represent a remnant of the older assumption, from which they have never actually freed themselves, that primitive peoples are fundamentally irrational.

We are here far from the fundamental question with which we began—why does there exist everywhere among aboriginal peoples the concept of an irreducible minimum? The answer should now be clear. Not only is this regarded as an attribute of living organisms but it is the primary concern of the economic structure to guarantee it. This does not mean that situations do not arise, created by the "antisocial" tendencies of the environment and of particular individuals which interfere with the successful achievement of this goal. However, the community reacts to them as it does to bodily disease. To these "antisocial" tendencies of particular individuals and groups we shall now turn.

chapter six

THE ECONOMIC UTILIZATIONS OF MAGIC AND RELIGION

MOST DISCUSSIONS OF ABORIGINAL RELIGION PLACE THE stress on the role played by fear and terror. The extent to which this is an accurate description will depend largely upon whether we accept literally the statements that individuals make and the manner in which we operate with the concept of fear. But we cannot take these statements at their face value, for what we are there told is often completely belied by the facts. Besides, many reputable observers and scholars seem to include under fear every variety of anxiety and every feeling of insecurity. Moreover, they are inclined to speak as though we were here dealing with fear as an entity as such. As a result, we are frequently presented with pic-

tures of primitive tribes completely dominated, in fact, almost paralyzed by fear and terror. Every ethnologist with any field-experience knows, of course, that no such communities exist.

Fear, let it be remembered, is no instinct; man was not born with it. Fear does not create anything. It is itself created within man through the impingement upon him of a number of facts from without and from within.

Of these facts assuredly the primary and the most important is economic and environmental insecurity, more specifically the former. But economic insecurity has many emotional and mental correlates. The mental correlate is a marked subjectivism. Subjectivism, in its turn, brings about the dominance of magic and often of the most elementary forms of coercive rites and emphasizes the strictly coercive aspects of religion.

Here again a word of caution is necessary. We must be careful not to treat magic, coercive rites and religion apart from the individuals who are involved in them and the individuals who use them for strictly personal, egotistic and antisocial purposes.

It is in such a framework that we must examine the economic utilizations of magic and religion. It seems best to discuss these utilizations in a progressive order beginning with tribes whose method of securing food is food gathering, proceeding then to hunters and fisherman and finally to agriculture.

Let us start with the beginning. Whatever may have been the mode of food production in early palaeolithic times, today there exists no tribe whose economic life is based on only one method of obtaining food. Not a few peoples exist today, it is true, whose economy is basically that of food-gatherers, but a certain amount of fishing and hunting is always practised even among these. The social and political organization of such tribes is gener-

ally simple and undifferentiated and their technological equipment equally simple.

This does not mean that truly religious individuals are not encountered there. But their immediate function is to attempt to bring about some order and to coordinate and evaluate the multifarous and inchoate folkloristic background.

In order to visualize the magico-religious milieu in which people with such cultures live, it is best to give a concrete instance. For the food-gathering-hunting societies one such example must suffice. I shall take the Yokuts of south-central California because an unusually competent and illuminating description of this aspect of their life exists.[1] The one feature the Yokuts possess which is not typical of this level of society is the existence of a fixed unit of exchange.

The most striking feature of Yokuts culture, from the religious viewpoint is the fear inspired by the shaman. This is not due to any unusual power that these men possess by virtue of being shaman for, at bottom, they have little, but to the alliance between them and the chief of the tribe. The latter controls or, at least, once controlled all the sources of income. These were, relatively speaking, fairly extensive considering the simple nature of the wealth-producing agencies. He had a monopoly on the trade of certain coveted objects; such as eagle-down, and the control of the rituals; he shared in the payments received by the local shaman and received money gifts from all visiting practitioners.

To understand fully the actual power of these shaman we should remember that all the organizational gifts they possessed went into the elaboration of the relations be-

[1] A. H. Gayton, *Yokuts-Mono Chiefs and Shamans,* University of California Publications in American Archeology and Ethnology, Vol. 24, No. 8, (1930) pp. 361 ff.

tween them and the chief of the tribe. These two worked hand in glove, the chief increasing his sources of wealth by his alliance with the shaman and the latter gaining the protection of the chief, a protection sorely needed, for great risks attended the exercise of their profession.

How the two, the chief and the shaman, worked together is admirably described by a native:

> If a man, especially a rich one, did not join in a dance, the chief and his doctors would plan to make this man or some member of his family sick . . . The doctor then sees to it that he is called in to make the cure. He makes several successive attempts to cure his victim, each time being paid for his services. He withholds his cure until he has financially broken the man and got him in debt. If he then cures the patient, he sucks the shot out and shows it to the bystanders, saying that the *nigot* (spirit) or a spring (spirit) has made him ill. On the other hand he may let the person die, in which case the family must perforce join in the mourning ceremony.
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> The money which the shaman has collected as fees in the case, he divides with the chief. Should the victim's relatives seek vengeance, for which they must obtain the chief's permission, the chief refuses his sanction on the ground of insufficient evidence. Has not the doctor shown that the nigot (spirit) had caused the illness?[2]

Thus the dread of the practical consequences of the shaman's activities hangs over the ordinary individual. That this dread is the outcome of the alliance between the chief and the shaman the example quoted above clearly demonstrates. It is clearly a form of gangsterism. The belief in spirits or, for that matter, in magical rites

[2] *Ibid.*, p. 399.

and formulae becomes of secondary consequence, a fact clearly shown by the looseness of the relation predicated between the individual and the supernatural powers. The gifts from such a supernatural power may, for instance, be accepted or rejected; the spirit may be sought specifically or he may, in other instances, come to a person voluntarily. Theoretically, any individual can obtain his gift. Actually, the number was drastically limited by the coterie of shaman, protected by the power of the chief.

The explanation for this limitation was naturally given in the terms of the shaman. It was, for instance, contended that the difficulties of establishing a successful relationship with the supernatural—fasting, praying in an isolated spot, taking a tobacco emetic, basking in the sun—that all these were too troublesome, and the danger of making mistakes which might subsequently incur the ill will of the supernatural beings too great, for the generality of mankind to attempt them. Here among the Yokuts the shaman did not have to possess any temperamental qualifications, religious or otherwise. What he had to possess was the protection of the system.

This the people at large seem to have recognized clearly, and this it is, far more than any fear, that explains the intensity of their opposition to him and their hatred. Had it been simply fear of the supernatural power which the ordinary man credited to the shaman, it would be somewhat difficult to see why the emphasis should have been placed so entirely on the evil side of their activities.

If then we will bear in mind that, even in simple societies whose basic economy is food-gathering, where magic and coercive rites rule supreme, that even there, a brazen and ruthless utilization of these rites and of religion for economic purposes takes place, then we can turn to some purpose to those cultures whose basic econ-

omy is fishing and hunting and see to what extent and in what form these utilizations are present and what new types of utilization appear.

Like the food-gatherers, most of the fishing-hunting civilizations live in marginal and uninviting areas of the earth. It is difficult, in fact, to imagine that the Eskimo, the Fuegians, the Andaman Islanders, or the Ainu arrived by choice at the inhospitable places where they now live or that they have stayed there otherwise than because it was impossible to migrate to other regions. Life is hard and, in spite of their technological advance over the simpler food-gatherers and their proximity to water, their food supply is essentially insecure. The fishing and hunting techniques which they have perfected do, however, considerably add to their economic security.

Inevitably the question arises, who, in a given tribe, profits most from this technological advance; who obtains the greatest security, acquires the most wealth, and secures some modicum of leisure?

Let us take the Eskimo as an example. Their social organization is of the very loosest kind. No chief and no centralized authority exist there. Murder and blood feuds are the order of the day. Yet their adjustment to this most inhospitable of environments is almost perfect. It was made possible by an astounding series of inventions connected with the harpoon, the kayak, and the snow-house. Where did these constructive forces come from? We naturally turn to the one group of individuals who are organized. We find that they are the *angakok* or shaman. They have managed to gather firmly into their hands whatever political power exists.

This is evidenced in a number of ways, perhaps in none more dramatically than that, in a civilization where murder is extremely common, they are never murdered

although they must be surrounded by people who hate them; and that, in a country where women are often at a premium, the shamans' rights to cohabit with them at will are generally recognized. The mechanism they have devised to gain and retain this power is the organization of a religious "fraternity," carefully restricted in numbers, a complex religious theory, and a spectacular shamanistic technique. Their well-integrated system is designed to do two things; to keep the contact with the supernatural exclusively in the hands of the *angakok*, and to manipulate and exploit the sense of the fear and economic and environmental insecurity of the ordinary man. Here the environment plays directly into their hands. We can thus easily understand the reason for the answer the Eskimo, Aua, gave to the great Danish explorer, Rasmussen, when he was asked: "What do you believe?" (This book page 74 f.).

Aua's answer represents good *angakok* theory although he himself was not one. It is fear of the general uncertainty, fear of the taboos that other people break, and fear, finally, of the dead and of the malevolent ghosts. What the *angakok* have really done is to combine the fear of economic insecurity, first, with the magical formulae and taboos and, secondly, with the fear of deceased human beings. The dead are feared in all these simple cultures, we may surmise, not because they are dead but because they are human beings whose activities cannot then be controlled as well as when they were alive, inadequate as that control may perhaps have been. This, also, let me add, lies at the basis of ancestor-worship.

The economic aspects of this *angakok* systematization are sharply and clearly outlined. Take, for example, the four main occasions where an *angakok* is asked to function among the Ammassalik Eskimo and when he must

summon his spirits. They are: the dearth of sea animals; the blocking of the hunting places by snow masses; a man's loss of his soul in illness; and a married woman's barrenness. It is also patent in the fact that around the food-quest as such there has been built up a series of rites under the complete control of the *angakok*. That the emoluments are considerable is indicated by the fact that as much as 150 to 200 dollars will be offered for a familiar spirit, something, incidentally, that only an *angakok* can obtain.

The same sharpness of outline is exhibited in the delineation of the supernatural beings. There is no vagueness in the conception of Sedna, the deity of the sea, or of the moon and the air deities. However, this definiteness does not flow from any conscious interest in portraying them as distinct entities but from the fact that they are represented as having all once been human beings. The hardness and cruelty of their relation to human beings, reflect this origin. And here, too, it is well to remember that it is the *angakok* who constrains the deities and that, although he may suffer cruelly during his initiation, once he has established the relationship with his helping spirit, life flows on for him in comparative ease. The deities are cruel specifically, only to the people at large, not so much to the *angakok*.

Though witchcraft and magic are admittedly salient traits of the very simple cultures, we know very well that they not only flourish in the more complex societies but that they often attain an unheard-of development there. Many students of ethnology have, in fact, assumed this to be a characteristic trait of all primitive cultures. Even so competent a scholar as Firth, when making a specific study of the economics of such a highly integrated civilization as that of the Maori of New Zealand, can think of the employment, in every

phase of their industry, of magical spells and formulae only as part of an irrational belief cradled in illusory power, and he falls back on meaningless psychological interpretations to explain it. We are to be satisfied with the statement that irrational belief helps the Maori to concentrate their faculties upon the work in hand and that it provides a useful element in organization. There is of course some truth in this. But Firth goes much further. Employing a time-honoured psychological interpretation, he insists that this same belief shields the Maori "from the gnawing of doubt and fear in the face of the unknown, giving him confidence and assurance to face those forces the effect of which in reality he can neither foresee nor control. Resting his faith on his magic, he is filled with conviction that his labour will in due time yield its fruits." [3]

A much more realistic picture of the true significance of magic and witchcraft has recently been given by two students of African society, E. E. Evans-Pritchard and S. F. Nadel.[4] Here the full economic import of magic and witchcraft emerges in startling fashion. Evans-Pritchard, on the basis of his study of the Zande of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, points out, first, that all members of the noble class and the rich and powerful among the commoners are immune from accusations; secondly, that the elaborate hierarchy of oracles of the Zande have as their chief object that of revealing witches; and, thirdly, that the chief's power is based upon the extent to which he can control the oracles.

Among the Nupe of West Africa the economic signifi-

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[3] R. Firth, *Primitive Economics of the New Zealand Maori*, (London, 1929), p. 265.

[4] E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft*, and S. F. Nadel, *Witchcraft and Anti-Witchcraft in Nupe Society*, Africa, (1935), Vol. VIII, pp. 417-448.

cance of witchcraft is equally marked. The head of the best-organized order of witches is there the official head of all the women in town. She supervises the market, organizes the common work of the women, and arbitrates their quarrels. She, alone, of all the witches is known and visible, recognized by the town authorities and by the king of Nupe. According to the official theory which Mr. Nadel summarizes, she makes use of her great powers of witchcraft for good purposes only. Because she is at one and the same time both the head of the women in the imaginary night-world of witchcraft and of the women in the real workaday world, she is also regarded as particularly qualified for still another type of work, that of ferreting out witches and fighting their secret antisocial activities.

This elaborate native theory has apparently been developed to explain the fact that the king or chief appoints her and that he generally selects a convicted or repentant witch, who is easily supervised and who is sufficiently trustworthy to be entrusted with so responsible a position. The advantages that accrue to the king by such an arrangement are obvious. By having complete control of the head of this "secret service" he keeps power within his own hands and can, at the same time, pretend to his fellowmen that he has gained a hold on the secret and intangible powers of witchcraft. The two of them, the king and the head of the witch order, are thus in an excellent position to find any guilty individual.

From the chief's point of view it is naturally of great advantage to have an assistant who can check the activities of her fellow-witches and who can not only restrain the too obnoxious or too violent ones among them but who is forced, at the same time, to assume personal responsibility for the behavior of the members of her

order. Nadel insists, somewhat strangely it seems to me, that no *lelu*—such is the official name of the head of the witches—once appointed, neglects her duties, and that she finds means to fulfil her responsibility to the community as well as to discover the required victim. As head of the market, he points out, she always remains in sufficiently intimate contact with the sources of public opinion to respond properly to its suggestions.

Ostensibly then the alliance between the chief and the *lelu* has as its main objective the suppression of witchcraft in the interests of the whole community, and it does, of course, fulfil this function. But the important point to bear in mind is not whether witchcraft is detected, but the degree to which it is allowed to flourish and the nature of the benefits that accrue to specific individuals and groups from the activities of those who practice it, as well as the benefits that accrue to those charged with neutralizing and punishing it.

Among the Nupe, we have seen, witches are used to fight witchcraft. Yet, of even more significance is the fact that, when the witches, to any really marked extent, get out of hand the campaign against them is entrusted not to a person like the *lelu* but to a special organization, an officially recognized secret society, which forms an integral part of the political structure of the Nupe kingdom.

According to the official religious theory, the members of this society received their supernatural knowledge and power from certain spirits and exercise their control over witches by means of this power. Their relationship to these spirits is of a specifically magical and coercive nature. They possess power over the spirits, not the reverse, and they can force these spirits to appear in certain magical ceremonies. The political and economic functions of this society are thus quite patent. The head

of the society has complete control of membership, both his office and his title being confirmed by the king. All the social implications connected with this society are given in an origin-myth—the nature of the paraphernalia of the cult, the fact that it is invoked against old women who mysteriously interfere with the proper order of things, and the culminating realization that it is a "magic of the king."

But on what occasions is the society asked to intermediate? There are two, one where a definite connection with the actual needs of an afflicted community exists, the other where there is none. Let me paraphrase Nadel's description of the second method. It carries its own implications and needs no further comment.

The second method, he informs us, is employed on instructions "from above." It is then that the full power of the secret society as well as its relation to the political structure of the Nupe kingdom becomes apparent. It works in the following manner. At a given time of the year, usually around the harvest, the head of the society appears at the king's court with a report that the activities of the witches in the country have increased to a dangerous degree, and he counsels the king to send the members of the society to the various villages to rid them of this antisocial plague. If the king agrees, and, naturally, he always does so, the head of the society mobilizes the various branches scattered throughout the countryside. The members suddenly appear in the villages, ostensibly to perform their dances and incidentally to "discover" and punish witches.

Within a short time the terrified women, learning that the members of the society are in the neighbourhood, either flee and hide in the bush or collect money to buy themselves free collectively. This money is sent to the place where the society members are performing. The

latter, after accepting this ransom, then perform some of the "harmless" dance ceremonies connected with their cult and omit the witch-hunting. However, the activity of the society has plunged the community into wild unrest. Households are dissolved, women neglect their duties, and money becomes scarce. As a result, a number of the village chiefs band together, collect a large sum of money, and bring it to the king, beseeching him to recall the members of the society. After three official but unavailing attempts to force their recall the society members at last leave. The head of the society himself appears at the king's court, this time, however, to divide the spoils. The king receives one-third while the head of the society keeps two-thirds. There are always spoils to be divided because, as we have seen, the date of the ceremony is set for the harvest time, when money is plentiful everywhere in the country.

It might not be out of place to mention that the secret society never operates in the capital of the kingdom. The official explanation is that here the king, helped by the *lelu,* can control witchcraft very well himself. It stands to reason that in the capital, which is the king's own town, it would not be advisable to permit the socially as well as economically disorganizing influence of the secret society full scope. This is to remain a weapon in the hands of the king and not one which may at any time be turned against him and thus endanger his own interests.[5]

Our two examples from Africa[6] must have made it clear that the existence of magic in societies that have long passed the simple food-gathering or fishing-hunting

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[5] Nadel, *op. cit.,* pp. 440-442.

[6] For fuller details of Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft among the Azande,* (Oxford, 1937) and Nadel, *A Black Byzantium: the Kingdom of Nupe in Nigeria,* (London, 1942).

stage, and its persistence in civilizations where elaborate religious superstructures have been developed, is due, over and above psychological reasons, to its usefulness in certain types of economic exploitation. That it has other societal functions as well goes without saying. Yet the primary reason for its persistence, and for the high degree of systematization it has so frequently attained, is economic.

The same holds true for the elaborations and systematization of rituals connected with the crises of life, biological and social, as I shall try to demonstrate in Chapter Seven.

chapter seven

THE CRISES OF LIFE AND THEIR RITUALS

FOR FEW OTHER FACTS IN LIFE IS IT POSSIBLE TO SHOW so direct a relationship between man and his animal forebears as for those of the sex cycle. It is not strange, then, that the sex cycle should have been the first to become socially crystallized, reorganized and reinterpreted. Nor is it strange that this reorganization and reinterpretation never attempted to disguise the biological facts and acts involved. This is particularly true of the physiological indications of puberty and of sexual intercourse.[1] Even in the most sophisticated religions the symbolism in which this reformulation is expressed has always re-

[1] A. E. Crawley, *The Mystic Rose*, revised by T. Besterman, (London, 1927).

mained threadbare. Equally significant is the manner in which this sex symbolism was extended to the universe in general. Not only was there a polarization of nature into male and female—the male sky and the female earth, the male sun and the female moon—but sex and its secondary ramifications were brought into immediate and fundamental connexion with the whole life of the group, particularly with regard to the assurance and the perpetuation of the food supply. Pantomime dances and coercive rites were its social expression.

There was, however, another side to this socialization which has had a direct bearing on the history of civilization. One of its constituent elements, puberty, became not simply the recognition that an individual had reached the age of sexual maturity; it became dramatized as the period of transition *par excellence*: the passing of an individual from the position of being an economic liability to that of an economic and social asset.

Two distinct sets of circumstances, one physiological, the other economic-social, thus conspired to make of puberty an outstanding focus which was to serve as the prototype for all other periods interpreted as transitional. It was certified and authenticated by magic and subsequently sanctified and sacramentalized by religion. Its social and economic significance and evaluation are attested by the fact that the simplest tribes, the food-gatherers and fishing-hunting peoples, have already developed intricate and complex initiation rites around it. These puberty rites are the fundamental and basic rites of mankind. They have been reorganized, remodelled and reinterpreted myriads of times and, on their analogy, have been created not only new types of societal units, such as secret societies, but new ideological systems as well.

So fructifying a source of social and religious inspira-

tion must manifestly have gained its hold upon man's workaday life and imagination for more than one reason. We have mentioned the primary one, the fact of its being encased in a physiological, social-economic and magical envelope. But certain secondary physiological elements were also involved. The period included between a woman's first menstruation, her pregnancy and childbirth—they must have followed in rapid succession in the first phases of civilization—necessitated her complete separation from the group activities for a varying length of time, a separation that became duly ritualized and dramatized very early.

Similarly puberty separated the young boy from the care of his mother and the older women who were bringing him up. This, too, became ritualized and dramatized in diverse ways. In both cases the separation constituted the prelude to a new reintroduction to the life of the group. It was at the same time a personal and social reintegration. As such it was seized upon by the medicine-man and thinker for the starting point of a series of symbolical interpretations. Of these the principal one was the idea that the individual had died and had been reborn again. This became one of the favourite themes of primitive man's philosophical and ethical speculations.

Of the two other major physiological events of life, birth and death, only death became a centre for social and ritualistic associations. Birth was, after all, but a special event in the central sex cycle whose focus was puberty. That, in many cases, it never attained any real independence was due to the circumstance that it was merely a biological fact and, in a society where economic security was at its lowest, not always the most welcome one, as the great prevalence of infanticide attests. Whatever potential future advantage it held for the group, an individual at birth constituted no immediate asset. The

observances and rites that clustered around birth were concerned, accordingly, more with the parents than with the child. It could develop into a true transition rite and become socially significant only when it did truly represent a transition, that is, after the theory of rebirth had become widespread and an individual was welcomed back into a world from which he had merely been away on a protracted leave. This is not to say that birth passed unnoticed ritually. But it was noticed over a prolonged period of time extending from the day of the child's advent into the world to the age of puberty. Birth was never regarded as a single dramatic fact to which an immediate and clearcut recognition had to be given.

The rites centering around puberty had as their objective the preparation of an individual for a full life as an integral part of the community and his initiation into a new status. The same held true, in a sense, for the death and funeral rites. But the new activities for which the dead man was being prepared and the new status into which he was being initiated, had a twofold reference. In part they pertained to this world, in part to the world of the imagination. The cardinal difference between the two lay in the fact that, whereas the puberty rites were positive and symbolized the separation of a youth from a life of social non-activity in order that he might be conducted into one of activity, the death rites were negative and symbolized the separation of a man from a life of activity so that he might begin one of inactivity. At least that was the goal sought by the living.

Of course, we do know that in these death separation-rites the wish was father to the thought. It was soon realized that the complete elimination of the dead was not an easy task. Instead of his complete separation and relegation to inactivity, a compromise was arrived at

which corresponded more accurately to the strong ambivalence of feeling with which the living regarded the dead. The separation between the dead man and the living world was made partial and gradual and the inactivity transformed into a latent hostility.

Yet the rites for the dead, in spite of all other constituents, remained basically a ritual of separation to which there was soon added the ritual of the soul's entry into a new non-human and altogether desirable world.

Here was a field as if made to order for the creative imagination of the medicine-man and poet-thinker, and the voluminous treatment received by the ritual-drama of the soul's separation from the land of the living and of its journey to the land of the dead and the blessed, indicates only too clearly the extent to which he took full advantage of it. Manifestly it was in the interests of people who craved that the dead be separated effectively and irrevocably from the living, to paint the haven to which the deceased were to be directed as free from the hardships and the insecurities of this world. Perhaps then they would stay there.

Innumerable variations were rung on this theme. They were all largely concerned with rebirth. Was death, for instance, to be taken as a reintegration of the Ego for renewed activity in a supernatural world or, ultimately, for renewed activity in this? Was the realm of the dead to become autonomous and co-equal with our own? Were the dead to become reincarnated? Was the distinction between life and death to become blurred or was it to be blotted out? Such were some of the problems for speculation.

In the simpler cultures, before the rise of full agriculture, the first view seems to have prevailed, and this belief in transmigration and reincarnation found its expression in such a conception, for instance, as that of the

Winnebago. There, death was interpreted as a momentary stumbling involving no loss of consciousness, although signifying a break in the means of communication between the dead and the living but which the dead, or at least the favoured dead, would, after considerable hardships and suffering, eventually restore.

Birth, puberty and death were thus, very early, recognized as an unending cycle, in which an individual passed from one level of existence to another. Of these the highest level was the period between puberty and the first signs of physical and social senility, that wherein a sexually mature individual began his full social realization. Death was its negation and birth its new affirmation. It is in this emphasis upon man as functioning in our workaday world that we find the clue to the ambivalent attitude toward death. As a biological extinction death had no terrors. The evidence for the correctness of this statement is overwhelming. Death conceived of as annihilation was, however, a denial of the highest and most meaningful functioning which an individual knew. Death was consequently to be interpreted as simply a temporary cessation of activity, just as the period between birth and puberty was to be regarded as an abeyance.

The puberty situation was thus the central and vivifying focal point from which rites and observances radiated in all directions. It was soon broken up into its constituent elements, most of which received special treatment. In the case of women the physiological facts —the first menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth—at first dwarfed the social-economic factors. In the case of men the social-economic factors from the very beginning dwarfed the physiological. This was natural enough at a period in history where woman's position was at best undifferentiated, politically and economically. The social-economic implications of this situation being thus

so much more important for the man, it is not surprising that the puberty rites connected with him have always remained far more complex and differentiated than those for the woman. The latter became progressively more complex as her economic functions became more important, after the introduction of agriculture, for instance. Occasionally, as in some West African tribes, puberty rites exist mainly for her alone.

To these puberty rites we shall now turn, taking as our examples the Arunta of Australia, the Selknam of Tierra del Fuego, the New Caledonians, the Ashanti of West Africa, and the Thonga of South Africa.[2] Space will permit us to describe in detail only the Australian rites. The rites here described represent the materials from which were subsequently developed those specifically magic-religious ceremonies and dramas and their analogues in other tribes that form so vital and integral a part of the life of most of the agricultural civilizations found among primitive people. To reject them as expressions of a significant order, by stressing too insistently, the presence of the magical and folkloristic nature of much of what is contained in these ritual dramas would be equivalent, on a different level, of course, to chiding the great classical drama of Greece for its retention of uncouth superstitions and for its often archaic delinea-

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[2] C. Strehlow, *Das Soziale Leben der Aranda und Loritja-Staemme*, (Frankfurt, 1913).

B. Spencer and F. J. Gillen, *The Arunta*, (London, 1927).

M. Gusinde, *Die Feuerland Indianer*, Vol. I, "Die Selknam," Anthropos Bibliothek, Moedling, (Vienna, 1931).

M. Léenhardt, *Notes d'Ethnologie Neo-Calédonienne*, Travaux et Mémoires de l'Institut d'Ethnologie, Vol. VIII, (Paris, 1931).

R. S. Rattray, *Religion and Art in Ashanti*, (Oxford, 1927), pp. 69-76.

H. A. Junod, *The Life of a South African Tribe*, (Neuchatel, 1913), Vol. I, pp. 71-92.

tion of the Greek deities or to dismissing as utterly magical the whole ritual of the Christian Passion because it obviously contains elements that hark back to a primitive and unintegrated past.

Every Australian boy when he reaches the age of puberty must submit to circumcision and subincision and participate in the series of ceremonies centering around them. In spite of the painfulness of the operations involved, particularly as they are carried out under the very primitive prevailing conditions, the young boys submit to them cheerfully, for in no other way can they acquire full social status. The German missionary Strehlow has described these rites with admirable understanding and his account will be followed. The series of ceremonies constitutes distinct acts in a long ritual drama and as such I shall present it:

ACT I. This act is given the generic name of *Thrown-toward-Heaven* because the essential part of the ceremony is the throwing of the novice into the air. As he falls to the ground he is subjected to a severe beating. The throwing in the air is supposed symbolically to assure him growth of stature and the beating to inspire him with fear for his elders.

The boy is then immediately separated from the camp of the married women and older unmarried girls and compelled to stay in that of the unmarried men. This separation is the first of many acts designed to wean him from the conception of women as mothers and as non-sexed and to substitute for it that of women as wives and as sexed. After being properly painted and smeared he is led before the elder men who throw him in the air, beat him, and then order him to retire into seclusion, to a place near their camp. There he must light a blazing fire. He is allowed to eat only plants. To symbolize this initial stage in his passage from the status of a boy, he is

given various names first, The-Fat-Besmeared-One and, second, The-Morally-Good-One.

ACT II. This often consists of two parts: the Ltata dance and the issuance of invitations to the neighboring camp to attend the initiation rites. The Ltata dance has as its purpose the mitigation of the boy's fear of the operation to be performed on him and to induce him to believe that he is really to be shown some new and interesting ceremonies. Its secondary purpose is that of acting as sex magic to interest the women in the men participating.

ACT III. The Circumcision. Before the elders proceed to the circumcision ceremonies proper, the boy is initiated into the knowledge of those secret rites that are in some manner connected with the mythical history of circumcision. After an all-night dance of the women, the young boy is first taken away from the camp and then brought back and ceremonially led to different parts of the initiation place. The next day he is newly decorated, given another name, and initiated into the knowledge of a few more secret rites. The one who is to perform the circumcision is then selected. Everything now is in readiness for the circumcision rites proper.

At a signal agreed upon, the novice, who has been sitting quietly with his head bent over his folded arms, suddenly jumps up and seats himself on a shield which his father's brother is holding. Two old women relatives then approach and efface the decoration which has been painted on his forehead just before he had been given his last name, and which was to symbolize that his separation from the women and from his former life was now complete. They warn him to avoid thereafter the footpaths used by women or any other place where he might encounter them. The novices are then driven away in fright by two men whirling bullroarers. Six men

are thereupon designated to build up a human "platform" upon which the novice is to lie when he is circumcised. This "platform" is formed by having one man stand on the ground on all fours while five other men lie across him, at right angles. Finally the operator appears, his eyes rolling and his whole behavior indicative of a madman. As he seizes the prepuce of the young boy, the audience of older men shout in chorus:

"Behold the maddened one! Let him circumcise the heaven-raised one!"

He then performs the circumcision. The blood flowing from the wound is caught in a shield and buried in a hole. The prepuce is then pressed against the abdomen of the boy's father and older brother in order to mitigate the pain that the sight of the novice's suffering may have caused them. It is then buried in some secret place.

The boy has now become a man, and to symbolize this fact he is initiated into the true nature of the bullroarer in the following manner and with the following words:

"We have always told you there was a spirit called Tuanjiraka and that he it was who had caused you pain. But you must now give up this belief and, instead, realize that the Tuanjiraka and the bullroarer are one and the same. When you were a child we spoke to you and to the women about you as though the two were distinct. Now the time has arrived for you to know that they are identical. Yet what we told you when you were a boy, this you must now in turn pass on to your children, so that the knowledge that Tuanjiraka does not really exist is not divulged to them. If this information were to become generally known then we would all disappear from the face of the earth and those below the skies would know that we had been wiped out. So, young man, you, like us, must never spread this information and must

never allow children to hear about it. Keep the knowledge of the bullroarer secret and spread the myth of Tuanjiraka. Like our ancestors, so you, too, have now become a man. Remember again that if the children were ever to hear the truth about it you would become deathly ill. So you must, like us, continue to lie and say: "Why, of course, Tuanjiraka exists." [3]

The main male participants now leave the scene of operations, and the novice is taken to a place outside the camp where he is carefully watched by specially appointed relatives. He receives two new names from the men, He-with-the-Wound and He-Who-Hides-Himself, and two new ones from the women and children, respectively, The-Child and The-Hidden-Little-Man. The youth himself applies special names to all the individuals involved in the ceremonial. He calls himself the Dog; the operator, the Pain-Instigator; he who holds the prepuce during the operation, He-in-Whose-Presence-We-Must Observe-Silence; and those who caught the blood in their shield are designated as Bound-to-Each-Other-by-the-Shield or Bound-to-Me-as-a-Father. He must remain silent in the presence of a number of these people until his wound has healed and he has presented them with a gift of meat. Then a short harangue on morals is delivered and a long series of food taboos imposed on him. As a matter of fact, he is allowed to eat only roots and the meat of a few animals, and threatened with being thrown into the fire if he disobeys. Finally he is taught an entirely new vocabulary, which he must use throughout his forced exile. Then he is removed to a place at a considerable distance from the camp and Act III is over.

ACT IV. The Subincision. This begins about six weeks after the circumcision. The young man is sent away on a

[3] Strehlow, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26.

hunt while his father is informed of the healing of the wound. Then the boy returns and is asked to sit in the midst of a circle formed by old men. He holds his head in his hands, and as he does so all the old men in succession bite his head till he is all covered with blood. The reason given by the natives for this very painful operation is that it insures the growth of head-hair. On the following day a long pole made of a eucalyptus limb is carefully wrapped with string fashioned from hair, decorated with black charcoal rings, and covered with birds' down. After it has been set up and duly admired, it is hidden just before evening, to be brought back again after midnight.

In the evening a group of men conduct the novice to a secret place. There the young men paint and decorate themselves to the accompaniment of songs sung by the old people. Ten young men then hide in the neighborhood only to rush back within a short time to perform an intricate pantomime dance. A long spear is now placed over the neck of the ten dancers and all go to join the old men. Shortly after midnight the old men, who have been resting until then, rise and start for a specially designated place near the camp, where, after a blazing fire has been started, they plant the decorated eucalyptus pole. This pole is supposed to symbolize the spear of one of their ancestors. At the first sign of dawn the novice is brought in from the camp. His father now presses the eucalyptus pole against the boy's abdomen, supposedly in order to drive away the fear of the impending pains and to give him courage. "Do not fear; remain quiet, for today you will become a man!" the boy is assured. Then he is placed on a human platform as in the case of the circumcision rite and the operation is performed.

The next two acts V and VI of the drama, the smudg-

ing rite and the rite to induce the growth of a long beard, are not of great importance.

ACT VII. The final act is called *Inkura.* This is a series of rites and dances which may take place as much as two years after the subincision. It often lasts more than two months. Women take part but only at the beginning and at the end.

A special piece of ground is prepared near the camp where the main festivities take place and in which are hidden bullroarers borrowed from neighboring camps. After this has been done, the chief returns to the main camp and distributes spears and spear-throwers to the various novices, who, carrying them on their shoulders, march to the specially designated place for the final act. They are almost immediately sent out on a hunt, and, after they have returned with their booty, a meal is prepared and they are initiated into the knowledge of a few more secret rites. In the ceremony that follows the women and children may take part but they must keep at some distance from the novice. At a prearranged time the chief calls the novices, and they appear running and throw themselves upon the ground in front of him. There they are placed on smoking branches of eucalyptus until they are covered with perspiration. When this is finished they rise and run away, pursued by their official guard. When they return they find that a long decorated pole has been erected to which small bullroarers have been attached. Near it is a large pit in which sit the ceremonial chief and his helpers. The novices rush toward it, one jumping into the pit and, at the same time, pressing the head of the chief down to signify that the ceremony is now over. Other novices sit at the end of the pit with their feet inside. A number of rites take place at the pole and finally, toward evening, a messenger is sent to the women to inform them that they are

now to come and view their future husbands. When they arrive, the old men paint and decorate the novices and the latter climb up the poles and slide down again. Shouting and shrieking, holding their hands on the back of their necks, they march in a goose-trot around the women. Then the women retire.

The old men now distribute bullroarers to the novices, and the latter scatter in all directions, swinging their bullroarers continuously in order to inspire the women with fear. It is also believed that this will awaken their passions. The boys have returned by this time and now lie down to sleep. While they are asleep the old men bury the pole. During the night the chief starts a fire at each of the cardinal points. At dawn he awakens the women and orders them to dig a small pit, light a fire, and throw branches into it. The novices now come forth, two at a time, and are placed on top of the smoking branches. After this smudging ceremony the women press their hands on the chests and the backs of the boys and take off their various finery. The fire is extinguished and the lengthy drama is over.

Before we turn to our next example, a few general comments might perhaps not be out of place. The native interpretation of these ceremonies is a model of realism. Their purpose is to insure the authority and wealth of the older men. Of the main native reasons enumerated by Strehlow[4] only one, for instance, is entirely magical, the reason for subincision. This rite is supposed to make the youth lithe and nimble so that he can ward off the spears of the enemy. Circumcision itself is interpreted in a number of ways: to prevent the prepuce from growing

[4] *Ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

together, to reduce sexual excesses, and to inculcate respect for the elders. But over and above all other reasons is the somewhat cynically expressed purpose of the old men of having the novices supply them, for many years, with regular presents in the form of animal food, of reserving the choice dishes for themselves by the utilization of the numerous food taboos imposed on the younger people, and, finally, of keeping the young women for themselves.

That rites of so vital a nature would early become associated with religious beliefs as such goes without saying. But here in Australia this association is manifestly secondary. Everything is definitely subordinated to a general social theme ceremonially conceived of as a progressive separation from one type of life and an entry into another, a progression which includes a number of steps recurring in all puberty rites whenever they have attained any complex expression.

Among the Selknam of Tierra del Fuego we find this theme even more dramatically stressed. The separation of the boys from their mothers is attended with all the signs of intense grief. The boys are there initiated by masked men impersonating spirits with whom they have to wrestle. They are overcome, the struggle symbolizing their death and rebirth. In spite of its marked penetration with definite religious beliefs the social-economic purpose is brought out with the same incisiveness as was the case for the Australians. The fundamental and immediate objective was to maintain power in the hands of the older people and to keep the women in proper subjection. But through it all the larger social-biological formula is still clearly visible, namely, the death in one status and the rebirth in another, on a higher level. The completion of this formula, the conception that ac-

tual death is really a protracted separation to serve as a transition to birth and for a repetition of the whole life cycle, this is unknown here.

Let us now turn to an entirely different culture, that of New Caledonia, which is based on agriculture and which possesses a highly specialized economic system. In general, it can be said that wherever full agriculture has developed the puberty ritual becomes considerably simplified because there are then other and newer rituals more specifically bound up with this mode of life to take the place of the older that serve as the ceremonial focal point.

As in other parts of the world the separation of the young boys from the women is strictly enjoined. Léenhardt says:

"The ceremony always takes place near some isolated body of water lying concealed under trees and where no strange eye can through chance penetrate. No woman is allowed to approach this retreat. The euphemistic expression employed in conversation with women to describe circumcision clearly indicates the secret character it was supposed to possess . . . The *pilou* are located in a place entirely cut off from the rest of the world. They lie within an area circumscribed by the body of water wherein the initiated bathe and where the skulls of ancestors are piled up. Here it is that the hut prepared for the newly circumcised boys is to be found and where they rest during their convalescence." [5]

Chastity is regarded as essential not because of moral scruples but because it is believed that sexual indulgence before initiation might prevent a successful circumcision. Great care is taken after the operation to prevent any

[5] Léenhardt, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

inflammation. As soon as the novices begin to convalesce, old women bring them food every five days. But they must eat by themselves and observe two main rules: not to allow themselves to be seen by the public and not to eat certain proscribed foods. As soon as possible they obtain their own food in order to demonstrate their skill to the community.

At night they go along the roads frequented by the people during the daytime and dig ditches in the earth in the shape of the birds, bats, and fish which they have succeeded in catching and eating. As a proof of their exploits they place at the bottom of the holes the fishbones and the remains of their game. The people are all excited when they come upon these things as they pass along the paths the next morning. Finally, as a still more marked indication of their vitality, the young novices plant a large pole on top of a hill. This high pole is in the nature of an announcement that the young men regard themselves as almost cured and that they are about to reenter the world of everyday life. It marks the "finale." The pole itself is called *ti* and is a replica of the *karoti* tree that is planted as a memorial of the dead and which effectively closes the road to him. The tree that is thus cut and planted, the *ti,* is supposed to recall the dead to one's mind. The *ti* itself decays and falls down. The circumcised *membrum virile,* which is its analogue, that, too, is a memento for the dead, but it endures forever.

Through this communion with the ancestors that is called to mind by the mutilation, the newly circumcised youths attain to their social maturity. They leave the tutelage of the women and are admitted to the society of men. But they still are not authorized to touch a woman except at their own risk and peril. For this they must await the decision of their elders. This is, of

course, accorded them. The woman that they then marry must be given a purification drink in order to remove the dangers attendant upon their union.[6]

The above account indicates clearly that both the separation and the circumcision are conceived of as a temporary death which is to be succeeded by a new and more mature life.

Among the Ashanti[7] of West Africa, in a civilization of the most complicated type both economically and politically, the basic formula encountered in the examples just given is still definitely visible. Here only girls go through a puberty ceremony. The theme of birth and death is repeated at every turn. An old woman told Rattray, for instance, that the reason why women are carried at certain parts of the ritual is that they are newly born and cannot walk. Similarly the old women in the tribe regard the ceremony with a note of sadness, taking it as a portent of their own death. "A birth in this world is a death in the world of ghosts; when a human mother conceives, a ghost-mother's infant is sickening to die." So runs an Ashanti proverb. There is no separation from the community among the Ashanti as in the other instances given. This theme has been transferred to the rites connected with birth.

In a way, the Ashanti puberty ceremony can be regarded as the positive phase of a lengthy initiation rite beginning with birth and of which birth is the negative or perhaps neutral side.

For our purposes the most important aspect of these Ashanti rites is the marked persistence of the magico-folkloristic background, on the one hand, and the intimate connection with religion, on the other, a connection not always apparent in the simpler cultures of primitive

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 140.
[7] Rattray, *op. cit.*, pp. 69-77.

people. But even here the gods enjoy no specific role. They are not even protectors. They are simply listeners to be informed, in ceremonial fashion, that something fundamental to the lives of human beings has taken place. The magico-folkloristic background still retains its autonomy.

Turning now to another region I shall select as a final example of the formula the well-known puberty rites of the Thonga of South-east Africa so admirably described by Junod.[8]

Here we find every element of the formula fully preserved. As in so many African and Oceanic tribes, all the rites centre around circumcision, and the complete ceremonial is, as a matter of fact, regarded as belonging to "the circumcision school." The economic aspects of the "school" are brought out very neatly at the very start.

The ceremonial is controlled by the chief and the arrangements are made by the council of headmen over which he presides. It is the chief who supervises it and who receives the fees paid by those who are to be initiated. The highly profitable nature of the ceremonial is also brought out by the fact that all those young men who were initiated on the previous occasion—the intervals are generally four years—have to attend the school as shepherds and act as servants of the leaders.

What we have here then is a true ritual-drama of impressive significance. It can be said to consist of three main acts:

ACT I. The separation from the world and the circumcision with its accompanying rites.

ACT II. Submission of the candidates to six trials or tests—blows at the slightest pretext—cold, thirst, unsavory food, punishment, and death.

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[8] Junod, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-92.

ACT III. The return to the world. For this there are four special rites. These latter represent a graded series of reintroductions to a new world and to a new status.

The last rite consists of what is called the chameleon procession. It is the final affirmation of the new life that has been attained. It is undertaken by the initiated to the capital of the chief. Covered with ochre, marching on mats spread out on the ground, the boys advance, slowly at first, bending their bodies forward. Suddenly they change into a brisk motion and, stretching out first one leg and then the other, they press forward, imitating the stately gait of the chameleon. Finally they enter the capital. There, with heads bowed, they sit in the central place. Now it is that their mothers and sisters are expected to recognize them. Each mother, carrying a bracelet or whatever present she may have brought, searches for her son and, when she has found him, kisses him on the cheek and gives him a gift. The boy then rises, strikes his mother a good blow on the shoulder, and utters the new name he has chosen, and the mother, in answer, begins to dance and sing the praises of her son. The ritual drama is over.

As I have already pointed out, the puberty ceremonial is the transition rite *par excellence*. Innumerable beliefs and observances cluster around birth, marriage, and other events of life but they rarely receive the same elaborate ritualistic treatment accorded puberty.

No one can possibly read the descriptions of the puberty-drama given above without being impressed with the manner in which heterogeneous elements of all kinds, most of them evidently derived from the most archaic stratum of the magico-folkloristic background, have been integrated into a consistent whole and how obviously this integration has been made to serve direct social-economic purposes. It is equally apparent that

these economic purposes do not always or even generally have only the good of the community as their primary objective and that, not infrequently, they directly serve the interests of certain groups or classes. In the simpler cultures they are the medicine-men, shaman or the elders; in the more complex ones, definite coteries or groups, whether we call them economic classes or not.

Manifestly this is not the work of the group as such nor the folk-soul expressing itself unconsciously in obedience to some mystical urge. Rather it is the accomplishment of specific individuals banded together formally or informally, individuals who possess a marked capacity for articulating their ideas and for organizing them into coherent systems, which, naturally, would be of profit to them and to those with whom they are allied. Here again we have the thinker, the religious formulator, at work. If, in the drama connected with the transition rites, his religious activities seem to be in abeyance, that is due to the patent fact that he has there to contend with the viewpoint of the non-religious man and because the social-economic purposes of the rites out-weigh all other considerations.

Since they are, after all, primarily rites of initiation into different types of status, the social-economic purposes which they are designed to fulfill predominate. Broadly speaking, they represent the coordination and elaboration of the folkloristic background, of the viewpoint and the attitudes of the average man, that is, of the man-of-action. But there are, of course, numerous situations that also demand attention, often connected with personal and societal crises and which are given expression in rituals that are true dramas where the viewpoint of the thinker and the fundamentally religious man is predominant. This is evidenced by the many philosophical and psychological implications found in them.

Indeed, one of their prime and obvious functions is, on the one hand, to validate the reality of the physical, outward world and the psychical inward world and, on the other, to dramatize the struggle for integration, that of the individual, the group and the external world. This is done in terms of a special symbolism which is expressed in actions and in words, a symbolism which represents the merging of images coming from within and from without. This validation, finally, is articulated artistically and creatively by individuals peculiarly qualified, emotionally and intellectually, that is, by the thinker and the religious formulator.

To understand the nature of the validation and integration here symbolized we have to remember aboriginal man's attitude toward consciousness and the presence there of the two temperamental types mentioned before, the man-of-action and the thinker, formulator and artist. Both conceive consciousness to be a continuum, indeed a timeless continuum, as an awareness which never ceases. Being alive is but one segment of it. This consciousness and awareness is a characteristic of the whole world of nature of which man, after all, is but an insignificant fraction. It finds its expression in the universal belief in the immortality of the soul and the very widespread belief in reincarnation in some form or another. Both, thinker and man-of-action, view the world and man as a dynamic continuum. Both predicate an intimate and interlocking interrelationship between man and the world of nature and both likewise recognize emphases and repetitions, as well as interruptions, interferences and disturbances within this continuum.

The differences in their viewpoints lie in the interpretations they give of these emphases and repetitions, of these interruptions, interferences and disturbances,

particularly of the latter. Both, let me add, divide such interruptions and interferences into three groups, nature's, man's conscious ones and man's unconscious ones.

To the man-of-action these interruptions and interferences never constitute breaks. He does not even regard the interruption of that aspect of consciousness which takes place at death as a break, but simply as a moment of temporary stumbling. At the worst the interruptions are halts, perceptible jolts, where the continuum, for a brief time, loses its dynamic nature. No terror is involved in their recognition. These halts and jolts are, moreover, not due to the conception that life or natural processes constitute a series of leases to be annually or periodically renewed. They are regarded, rather, as the imperfections brought about by the impingement of the world of nature upon that of man, by the impingement of life upon life and by the activities of man, conscious and unconscious. Man corrects these interruptions and interferences, as best he can, and restores equilibrium to his world, by old, tried and traditionally sanctioned actions and activities which are expressed externally by what can be called good manners and internally by respect. What he attempts to do is to validate reality in terms of a reemphasis of a continuum that is never conceived of as broken. All that the interruptions, interferences and disturbances can do is to bring about a rearrangement of the same elements within a dynamic continuum.

The viewpoint of the artist-philosopher and thinker is basically different here. For him interruptions and interferences are either in the nature of true breaks, dangerous lesions which have to be definitely healed or, on the other hand, represent something which has been lost and has to be rediscovered or, again, constitute an eclipse of

what has run its course and will return no more and has to be replaced by something new, yet identical. Terror is generally present here whether real or feigned.

We must not, then, be surprised to find the thinker emphasizing crises, contrasts and oppositions, the static versus the dynamic, death and rebirth, life and death, health and disease, beginning and ending, the sacred and the profane. Nor should we be surprised to find the man-of-action profoundly influenced and accepting, often inconsistently, the formulations of the thinker who, be it remembered, is generally the medicine-man or priest, as well.

For the thinker and artist-philosopher the interruption in one aspect of consciousness which occurs at death is not a mere stumbling but a break, a serious rupture of the basic continuum which can be repaired only slowly and then only after pain and suffering.

Since, from his point-of-view, interruptions thus constitute a serious breach of the continuum, order cannot be restored easily or at once. Manners, etiquette, as known to the man-of-action, are here not adequate or efficacious. They must be integrated into a new whole, be elaborated and reinterpreted so that they become ritualistic rules for establishing distance and propinquity.

Here we are clearly in the realm of the profane and the sacred. But this is manifestly only the first and preliminary step. A fundamental crisis for man and nature is here involved. Something that has been broken must be mended, that which has been temporarily lost must be rediscovered, what has seemingly expired must be reinvigorated and what has run its course must be renewed. To accomplish this the thinker and artist-philosopher elaborated the rites and ritual activities which he found at hand and created something new, the ritual drama proper. That we are not claiming too much, when we say

that this is his special and particular achievement, is best proved by the fact that only where his formulations are dominant, that is, primarily in agricultural civilizations, and at cultural crises, do we encounter true ritual-dramas.

But if this is so, if ritual-dramas are quite definitely the work of the thinker and artist-philosopher and are found in societies with a specific economic and political structure or during times of marked cultural stress, it might well profit us to ask what specific relation the ritual-drama has to the man or men who so largely created it. We shall then discover that, as I have already repeatedly stressed, these individuals are not only creative artists but that they are the truly religious members of the group.

Yet something else is involved here, too, which is of fundamental significance, namely, that the majority of individuals with whom we are here concerned have, because of their particular psychical make-up, frequently experienced in their own persons, interferences, disturbances and breaks, outward and inward, which are in the most urgent and immediate need of attention. The mechanisms by which they meet these breaks and heal them, the manner in which they achieve integration anew, constitute a true and poignant drama which often completely overwhelms them. It is this personal drama which they then project upon the world of their fellowmen.

It is the coalescence of this elemental, vital and personal drama, which pervades and obsesses a man's whole being, with the rites and ritual activities of the whole group that produces true rituals, and true rituals are always ritual-dramas.

Why this coalescence takes place almost exclusively in agricultural civilizations, is somewhat difficult to say. But it is a fact. Undoubtedly it must be largely bound

up with political and social-economic factors. Into the nature of these we cannot, however, enter here. All we know is that where the proper political and social-economic conditions are not present, there we do not, as a rule, find true ritual-dramas.

In the ritual-dramas which develop in agricultural civilizations, the personal drama is not infrequently overwhelmed by rites, magical and otherwise, by practical ritualized group activities, and by the demands of the man-of-action, that is, layman. In other words, the whole life of the community, in all its multifarious aspects, is frequently injected into the ritual-drama. Often, likewise, the latter becomes essentially a pageant to be enjoyed as such. In these cases, it is generally difficult, if not impossible, to detect the presence of the personal drama. Yet it is actually always there and becomes reinvigorated and endowed with a new life in tribal and personal crises.

As an example of such a ritual-drama, let me outline the rites and activities of the Oglala Dakota Sun Dance.[9]

A. PRELIMINARY RITES

I Choosing the mentor to prepare the candidate
II Sending out of invitations to the various bands of the tribe
III The preparation of the candidate
1. *Sweatbath*
2. *Vision of quest*
3. *Erection of the altar, the placing of the buffalo skull upon it*
4. *"Meditation" couch for the candidate*
5. *Consecration of candidate and everything connected with him*
6. *Inculcation of rules of behavior to be observed by candidate*

[9] J. Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 42 f.

IV Mentor's exoteric instructions to candidate
V Mentor's esoteric instructions to candidate
VI Journey of various bands to the official Sun Dance Site

B. SUN DANCE PROPER

THE FIRST FOUR DAY PERIOD

I First day
1. *Organizing of preliminary camp, etc.*
2. *Smoking of pipe to bring about harmony and communion*
3. *Appointment of heralds and marshals*

II Second day
1. *Appointment of children whose ears are to be pierced*
2. *Announcement by parents who wish to place their children in the procession to the sacred tree*
3. *Announcement by virgins who wish to be appointed female attendants for the main participants i.e., the candidates*
4. *Announcement by women who wish to chop the sacred tree*

III Third Day
1. *Announcement of those who are to function as scouts, etc.*
2. *Decoration of buffalo head*
3. *Feast of buffalo tongues*

IV Fourth Day
1. *Announcement of names of the women selected to chop sacred tree and of woman who is to actually fell it*
2. *Feast for virgins permitted in dance-lodge*
3. *Propitiation by mentors, from a nearby hill, of the Four Winds*

THE SECOND FOUR DAY PERIOD

I First Day
1. *Symbolical fight against malevolent deities on site of ceremonial camp. Charge against them as if they were enemies*
2. *Establishment of ceremonial camp*
3. *Location of sacred spot where (sacred) tree is to be placed*
4. *Erection of sacred lodge*
5. *Scouting for (sacred) tree*
6. *Building of Sun lodge*
7. *Buffalo feast*

II Second Day
1. *Capture of (sacred) tree*
2. *Binding of (sacred) tree*
3. *Appointment of procession to bring (sacred) tree to camp*
4. *Warriors count coup on (sacred) tree*
5. *Felling of (sacred) tree*
6. *Declaring of tree sacred*
7. *Carrying of sacred tree into camp*
8. *Painting and preparation of sacred tree*

III Third Day
1. *Procession of sex*
2. *Raising of sacred tree*
3. *Interval period of license*
4. *Driving out of spirits presiding over license*
5. *Preparation for the four types of torture*

IV Fourth Day
1. *Greeting the rising sun at top hill*
2. *Race of young warriors around Sun lodge*
3. *Preparation of candidates for torture*
4. *Carrying of buffalo head from sacred lodge*
5. *Demolition of sacred lodge*

6. *Procession to Sun lodge*
7. *Piercing the children's ears*
8. *The Sun-gaze rite*
    a. Capture of the candidate
    b. Torture of the candidate
    c. Captivity of candidate
    d. Escape of candidate

We have here a combination of independent rites into a new whole to meet a new situation. What was the situation? For more than three hundred years it seems to have been the fate of the Dakota to lose trait after trait of their original culture as they forced themselves and were, in turn, forced westwards from the upper Mississippi valley. When they finally came to the Dakotas, their whole tribal organization had become completely disrupted and they had become a nation of warriors and extreme individualists. Their problem, thus, became primarily not how to preserve their culture from disintegration but how to preserve themselves from disintegration. This is the basic theme of the Oglala Sun Dance. And that is why aggression and attack loom so large in it and only lip service is rendered to peace and the saving of the community. Their problem was manifestly how to regain roots. This is the significance of the sacred tree. But even there they have to begin by overstressing the fact that it is an enemy to be forcibly overcome. The ritual ends (IV, 8. a-d) on an essentially defeatist note. "We have been seized by an enemy," so it almost militantly informs us, "then tortured and forced into captivity and we are valiantly attempting to escape."

During the major crises which were brought about by the impact of European upon native cultures, the personal drama, powerfully activated by forces within each man's psyche, often overwhelms, secondarily, of course,

the other elements of the ritual drama proper. And at such a moment, it can be said, that the whole group, for a time at least, reenacts the artist-philosopher's personal drama.

part two

THE STRUCTURES OF SOCIETY

chapter eight

GOVERNMENT, REAL AND SYMBOLICAL

WHATEVER MAY HAVE BEEN THE SITUATION BEFORE OUR contact with primitive peoples, ever since our records begin, only a partial correlation has been found to exist among them between the social-political structure and the method of food procurement or food-production. There is some reason, however, for believing that the clan organization did not come into existence until the rise of agriculture, i.e., until 6000 B.C. at the earliest. Admittedly, this is an assumption based on the fact that today the clan is not encountered among food-gathering tribes and only infrequently among fishing and hunting tribes. The exceptions are actually few in number and

can, in part, at least, be explained as secondary borrowings.

To all intents and purposes we can begin with the assumption that agriculture and clan organization are closely bound up together. Whether a clan organization developed in neolithic times on the basis of an agricultural food economy and then spread, or whether it can and did develop repeatedly wherever agriculture was practiced, that, fortunately, we do not have to decide here. All we need bear in mind is that the complex, agriculture-clan spread and was adopted by innumerable tribes who had previously been fishermen and hunters and who had known nothing about such a type of organization. Similarly, we know that the reverse has also taken place, namely, that non-clan fishing and hunting tribes have displaced clan-agricultural societies. In a number of instances agricultural communities who now have no clans once possessed them.

A concise and generalized sketch of the social-political structure of primitive peoples is beset with unusual difficulties. Nevertheless all these societies have enough traits in common, however "mixed" their economic or their social-political configurations may be, to make a generalized description possible and significant, in spite of the disadvantages inhering in a schematic presentation.

Since the method of food procurement and food-production[1] must lie at the basis of the political structure even if, in primitive civilizations, other factors are prominent in determining its specific physiognomy, we shall arrange the discussion of these structures in terms of it. In this schematic arrangement we are not, however, postulating stages. We are, however, assuming,

[1] I shall from here on use the term *food-production* exclusively for *agriculture.*

together with most anthropologists, that the food-gathering economy is simpler than the fishing-hunting one and that it preceded it.

For the more or less clear-cut food-gathering tribes the question of their political structure generally merges into that of the nature of their organization of authority. This, again, is apt to be a function of the immediate economic needs, food, shelter, and clothing. The family as a bio-economic unit is the only force making for cohesion and integration here, except in so far as the physical environment may play that role. But this cohesion, it cannot be too often repeated, does not inhere in the nature of the family tie as such any more than it does in the physical environment.

That the conditions of living may conceivably make for a marked limitation of the range of ideas, as some contend, is possibly true. Forde[2] voices the opinion of the majority of anthropological field-workers and theorists when, speaking of the Semang of the Malay Peninsula, he says: "The knowledge and opinions of his elder relatives are the only views he hears. This limited range of contact and stimulus is of fundamental importance in understanding the stability and slowness of change among the simpler societies of man." What is, however, frequently forgotten is that these very restrictions in the conditions of living also have a positive side. They necessitate the development of a marked degree of quick adaptability and plasticity.

The variable forms assumed by the political structures found among these tribes, range all the way from the loosest kind of recognition of the authority of an elder to that of practically fixed chieftainship and from that of the most transitory of camp-sites to more or less definitely and reasonably lasting settlements with a

[2] *Habitat, Economy and Society* (New York, 1937), p. 13.

fairly clear-cut consciousness of being a well-differentiated social unit. Some attempt assuredly must be made to explain all this. Similarly, the amazing variability in the organization of religious beliefs and the utter absence of rites and ceremonies in some cases and their exuberant development in others, this, too, must be accounted for. Neither the physical environment nor contact with other tribes is always the necessary or even the likely explanation. It is far more reasonable to ascribe it to the resiliency and adaptability that has developed in the interaction of men and women through the exacting economic requirements of a particular situation.

Integration and discipline exist on this as on every other economic level. The depiction of man in these politically very simple societies as if there he was nearer the brute than in the economically more complicated cultures, and more definitely under the sway of undisciplined passions and emotions, is a pure figment of the imagination. In fact, it is in the very disciplining of his personality and its integration with his economic needs and with a particular environment, that the possibility of "government" properly lies. Certainly not in the blood-tie.

That it is not the latter is best indicated by the fact that, in so far as any true techniques for establishing and authenticating relationships between individuals exist, it is the technique of distance that finds expression, that, namely, subsisting between seniors and juniors, in short, a type of "age stratification." The technique expressing degrees of intimacy is, on the whole, poorly developed. The economic conditions constrain them to be so. Mutual obligations, real and symbolic that play so fundamental a role in the more complicated societies, are here unusually weak, if they exist at all. In regard to the position of women on this level,

it is difficult to make generalizations. The assumption, however, that women are completely subordinated to men was based on one case, that of Australia and this has now largely been disproved.

The conditions are naturally more complex among the simple fishers and hunters.[3] First of all, only certain kinds of animals can be obtained without the active co-operation of others. Implements and weapons have to be fashioned. Property is more plentiful. Methods of distribution and systems of exchange and barter become important. Settlements have to be of a more permanent nature. But, over and above everything else, populations are larger than is the case for food-gatherers.

Thus, more economic factors are present here making for organization and integration and these are bound to be reflected in the social-political structure. Furthermore, there are more people to be governed and the relations between them regulated, more places to be settled and a larger and more variegated food supply to be brought into proper coordination with them. For this purpose, special types and units of authority with all kinds of implications must be developed. We shall touch here on only a few of them.

Let us first determine what are the units in the political structure. Let us begin with the fishing-hunting civilizations. The family comes first. The blood-tie has begun to be of importance and this is reflected in the fuller elaboration of the details of the technique for regulating degrees of intimacy. We find a differentiated evaluation of relatives expressed in reciprocal duties and obligations. Hand in hand with the elaboration of the technique for intimacy there goes that of the technique for distance.

[3] Fishing-hunting economies with a clan organization are not being considered here.

But why, it may legitimately be asked, was the blood-tie extended in these fishing-hunting civilizations? Where the clan organization prevails this is clear enough because of the symbolical-fictitional nature of the concept underlying the clan bond. But this is not at all self-evident where it does not prevail. The answer seems to lie in the influence of the new needs brought about by the cooperative aspects of fishing and hunting upon the concept of the family, a concept which was further enlarged by the emergence of personal proprietary rights both in the articles used, the animals captured, and the places wherein fishing and hunting occurred.

Property, we have seen, implied systems of transfer and exchange, and questions of inheritance. For the successful functioning of all these different activities additional individuals were necessary and these individuals were naturally selected from among those people with whom one would be in contact because of blood-ties. This, then, is what the extension of the simple family implied.

The importance, for our immediate purpose, of this enlargement of the family unit with its stressing of the degrees of intimacy, as well as the more precise definition of the degrees of distance, lies in its bearing on what can be legitimately called the administrative and executive sides of the political structure. They are embedded in these two social mechanisms.

Since tribal cohesion is never very strongly developed in these civilizations, the enlarged family or a number of enlarged families, often collaterally connected, dominate the political scene and the administrative functions are in their hands. Such groups can be fairly large and they generally live in scattered settlements more or less fixed. Such groups are, properly speaking, bands

and may have a considerable degree of cohesion, symbolized, first, by strictly delimited territories in which they fish and hunt and over which they claim exclusive rights for themselves and their descendants and, secondly, by having children reckoned as belonging fairly exclusively to the father's side. This is, however, quite distinct from saying that descent is reckoned in the father's line.

Some type of chieftainship generally exists but the degree of authority a chief possesses is not great. It depends largely upon his distinction in fishing and hunting and upon his age. Within the immediate family, however, and often within the enlarged family proper, this combination of traditional obligations due him and his professional status may lead to a certain degree of deference being paid him. But as, within the family, he probably owes as many traditional obligations to others as they to him, his apparent advantage is generally neutralized. No centralized authority and no executive position is really necessary for the tasks to be solved. The few "administrators" and "functionaries" needed, are always present, for these positions are determined, within reason, by blood-relationships.

Among the food-gatherers, grandparent, father, mother, even the child above the age of five, were all socially equivalent as far as concerned their participation in securing the necessities of life, although the women actually procured most of the food. Here, in the fishing-hunting societies, to the social equivalence of the men and women, there was added a strict division of labor. Where among the food-gatherers the woman was the main procurer of food, here among the fishermen-hunters, the role was reversed and the status of women became somewhat lower than it had been in the former instance.

It is with the social-political framework of the fishing-hunter civilizations firmly in our mind that we must approach many of the agricultural civilizations. In the Americas we know definitely that the former have given way to the latter frequently and, in not a few instances, within comparatively recent times. Two thousand years ago, for instance, there probably was no civilization north of the Rio Grande that was primarily based on agriculture and thirty-five hundred years ago it is doubtful whether any existed in the New World. In the United States, the really significant spread of agriculture from both the southwest and the lower Mississippi valley probably did not take place much before the eleventh century A.D., and in the Great Lakes region and the whole area north of the Ohio river it was unquestionably later. It should not surprise us, then, to find mixed economies—hunter-fisher and agricultural—and mixed political structures everywhere.

In Africa, Asia, Malaysia, Indonesia and Oceania, the case is quite different. Throughout this area agriculture is very old. We need not suppose that any traits of the older fisher-hunter political structure have survived. Indeed, we need not suppose that an older economy had ever existed in many places.

In view of these and other facts it is best to divide the agricultural civilizations into two groups: the fisher-hunter-agriculturists and the pure agriculturists, where fishing and hunting exist but are negligible features of the economy. An interesting correlation exists here between an economy and the political structure. The people with mixed economies have, almost universally, a clan organization, whereas the pure agriculturists fall into two groups. Most of the New World, all of native Africa, large areas of southern Asia, many parts of Oceania and sporadic areas in Malaysia and Indonesia

have a clan, whereas most of Malaysia and Indonesia and practically all of eastern Polynesia do not possess one.

This distribution will have a greater significance if it is remembered that the ancient Egyptians, the ancient Semites, the Chinese and probably the ancient Sumerians had a clan organization and that it is still an open question whether the ancient Greeks, Romans, Celts, and Germans did or did not possess it.

Before proceding to a fairly detailed discussion of these clan-agricultural communities, my reasons for subordinating the non-clan agricultural communities to secondary importance in this book, deserve a few words. There are two types of such communities, those with simple agriculture, like the tribes of the Lower Colorado and the Ges tribes of Brazil, and those with a highly elaborated agriculture, as in Malaysia, Indonesia, and Oceania. The social-political structure of the former is simple, that of the latter extremely complex. Agriculture is clearly marginal among the former; it is fundamental among the latter. We can thus regard agriculture among the first group of tribes as a comparatively recent borrowing which in no way contradicts our general thesis that it is basically an accompaniment of the clan organization. For the second group we have either to suppose that they once had it and lost it or that they came to these regions without it. In the United States there is one well-known example of a highly elaborate agricultural civilization without a clan organization, the Pawnee and related tribes. But the overwhelming presumption there is that they have lost it.

We cannot here go into the intricate historical discussion either supposition would involve. Since, however, all the tribes of the second type came from an Asiatic homeland where clans, in association with agriculture,

are typically developed, there is a probability practically amounting to certainty that they once possessed a clan organization. That they no longer have it today is, therefore, secondary. Yet this is not the main reason for neglecting them here. With the exception of the Polynesians and Micronesians, all these tribes have been profoundly influenced and modified by contact with Hindu and Mohammedan influences. The Hindu influences go back as far as the seventh century A.D., at least, and continued well into the fourteenth, and the Mohammedan influences probably go back to the eleventh century. Under these circumstances the tribes in question can hardly be regarded as illustrative of the form and the functioning of stable primitive societies. The same, of course, holds true for most of Africa. If, nevertheless, I have given aboriginal Africa more space, it is because the older aspects of these civilizations are still present and of great importance there. As for the Polynesians and Micronesians only the exigencies of space have prevented their inclusion. The most essential characteristics of their civilization will, however, be touched upon in connection with the discussion of social stratification.

It might be said in passing that both the Polynesians and Micronesians, more particularly the former, must have been influenced by the complex cultures of the mainland of southeast China before they arrived at their island homes. But those influences unquestionably antedated the spread of Hindu civilization to Indonesia.

Since the overwhelming number of agricultural peoples thus possess a clan we can regard this correlation of a food economy and a special type of social-political structure as absolutely valid. However, although I believe that there must have been a direct relationship between agriculture and the clan organization originally, today, certainly, the correlation has ceased to have any significance. We can, accordingly, describe the clan and

its cognates, the phratry and the dual division, without reference to it. For our purposes, however, it is not necessary to make any distinction between the clan, the phratry and the dual division.

The clan, in spite of all the attacks that have been made upon its ubiquity, particularly by American anthropologists, is clearly the fundamental form the social-political organization of primitive people assumed. After all, two-thirds of the primitive population lived under this particular form of government and, even when other political structures and concepts were imposed upon it, as not infrequently happened, its implications still remained paramount.

The primary fact to remember about the clan is that it was a political institution, the earliest truly cohesive governmental unit of which we have any record. This cohesion has been brought about by the extension of the concept of blood-relationship to include not only blood-relatives but a large number of other individuals between whom no such relationship actually exists. All these individuals are then placed in a well-defined group of their own by a number of group-cementing devices. They may not intermarry and they generally reckon descent either from a common animal ancestor or some common event in the distant past. Not infrequently they all live together in the same village.

Let us, however, return to the concept of blood-relationship. It is not only enlarged and extended so as to include non-relatives, but the nature of the bond between true blood-relatives receives a twofold treatment. Certain of them, for instance, the father's brother, the mother's sister and their children, become absolutely equivalent with one's own father, one's own mother and one's own brothers and sisters. Depending entirely upon whether descent is reckoned in the father's or the mother's line, the children of the children of a father's

brother or a mother's sister and their direct descendants, bearing in mind the method of reckoning descent, will continue to call themselves brothers and sisters. They will call their father's brothers and their mother's sisters, father and mother in perpetuity, theoretically, at least.

Other blood-relatives, on the contrary, will, after two generations, be dropped from that category, the children, namely, of cross-cousins.[4] Indeed one's own cross-cousins occupy a midway position between blood-relatives and non-relatives, a fact signalized by the frequent occurrence of marriage between them. The same circumstance that places these cross-cousins in this category, namely, that they cannot belong to one's clan, also gives one's own father or mother, and those one calls fathers and mothers, as the case may be, a twofold reference.

From these two facts, the presence of a large group of individuals outside of one's clan to whom one is not related and of a fairly large number of individuals within the enlarged family to whom one is fictionally and symbolically semirelated and whom, at any rate, one regards as being the parents or grandparents of individuals to whom one will not be related, from these facts certain very important consequences flow. Better said, these consequences must flow from certain conditions.

It is at this point that anthropological analyses have so frequently bogged down, primarily, I surmise, because few anthropologists, at bottom, have been willing to admit that primitive man was ever effectively guided by rationalistic or realistic considerations in the attainment of his goals. He has never really been regarded as

[4] In anthropological literature the children of a brother and a sister are called cross-cousins, the children of brothers, on the one hand, and of sisters, on the other, being called parallel cousins.

efficient by them. No intricate and well-integrated system of this kind, possessing at the same time so much plasticity, ever, however, exists in a vacuum. Nor is it, to any extent, to be regarded as the expression of a mentality compounded of magical and prelogical ingredients or as flowing from practical activities that are likely to be thwarted and largely neutralized by undisciplined emotions.

What function, then, did the clan and the classificatory system of relationships always associated with it fulfill? [5] For what ends was all this designed? To this we can now proceed, although the answer has already been foreshadowed.

The clan served as an administrative framework in which fixed positions existed that were filled generation after generation by individuals according to a "list" made up, in a specified fashion, based on the classificatory system of relationships. There were two main divisions of such functionaries, those that were concerned with the more intimate parental-child relation and those primarily concerned with the administrative-judicial problems of the enlarged family. A father's brother had, for instance, certain duties to perform and so did a mother's sister. These reenforced the body of traditional functions and obligations that were imposed by the immediate parent-child blood-tie. They belonged to the first division of functionaries.

A mother's brother and father's sister, on the other hand, although they belonged to the second division of such functionaries, still had to take upon themselves certain duties connected with the business of the im-

[5] All the various interpretations have been summarized by R. H. Lowie in *The History of Ethnological Theory* (New York, 1937). Cf. especially the pages on relationship terms. The literature is enormous. This is the arena in which all the logical tournaments of anthropological theorists have taken place.

mediate family by virtue of their close relationship to the children of their sisters and brothers. They had, in addition, functions to exercise in the administration of the affairs relating to the enlarged family and—this is a highly important aspect of their functions—to act as mediators of their nieces and nephews to the larger political units such as the phratry where it existed, to the tribe, and to the world at large.

The number of such "functionaries" provided for in the classificatory system is large and their duties and powers varied. We need not, however, enter into any further detail here. The example given above is adequate for our purpose.

On the basis of a purely logical analysis, it would be easy to show that in the classificatory systems of relationships, a number of apparently contradictory principles are present, the principle of the blood-bond, the principle of generations, the principle of social equivalence. Kroeber has pointed this out in a well-known paper.[6] He has, however, in the manner of so many students of social theory, chosen to stay entirely within a purely logical-psychological realm.[7]

But there is no contradiction and no criss-crossing involved here when we realize that we are dealing with the translation into a conceptual system of practical activities. In the coordination of these activities, three distinct social-political units have to be considered, the family, the clan, and the tribe. But that is not all. Out-

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[6] A. L. Kroeber, "Classificatory Systems of Relationship," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, Vol. 39, 1909. The most significant work on this subject to appear in the last two generations is that of C. Lévi-Strauss, *Les Structures Elémentaires de la Parenté* (Paris, 1949).

[7] In the encyclopedic study by T. Parsons entitled, *The Structure of Social Action*, in spite of certain protests to the contrary and in an atmosphere quite unfriendly to it, this interesting author likewise insists upon remaining on these rarefied heights.

side of all these units there existed the old traditional techniques for expressing distance and intimacy. These had developed, in addition, an intricate system of types of etiquette, courtesies, privileges and obligations of vital importance to the social-political framework of agricultural societies which possessed the most far-reaching economic implications. These too had to be incorporated into this coordinating system. This, after all, is what the classificatory system fundamentally is. But these institutional units, instead of contradicting and interfering, the one with the other, actually reenforce one another.

The classificatory was not a unified logical system from the point of view of terminology. It could not very well have been, considering what it was asked to express. But even if, by some logical miracle, the mutually intersecting principles of which Kroeber speaks had been duly harmonized, the individuals holding the traditional positions within the institutional framework would immediately have disrupted it. There were simply too many of them. Indeed, every man and woman in the clan eventually filled such a position.

In a sense, this whole system of inherited positions had all the characteristics of a bureaucracy, its topheaviness, the overlapping and duplication of functions, the quarrels and conflicts between individuals for influence and, above all, the insistence upon a punctilious observance of the details connected with rights and privileges. Any one who has ever lived in a tribe with a clan organization, even where it no longer functioned properly, must have been impressed by the interminable squabbling that went on around these questions.

Yet dissent and conflict could only proceed within definitely prescribed limits, and they could, at best, take on a purely personal aspect. Positions, after all, were inherited and functions, privileges, obligations and pro-

cedures fixed. You could conceivably revolt against the functions assigned to you, for instance, as a mother's brother; you could refuse to perform your obligations; you could take advantage of the privileges you possessed. But you could not very well revolt against a position that was determined by your blood-relationship and was eternal.

If one, therefore, hears of no revolt against the clan, the reason lies in these inexorable facts. A clan disintegrates only from the impact of an external crisis. In this connection, it is interesting to note that in numerous instances where the external shell of the clan has long disappeared—interdiction of marriage between clan members, the clan name, the unilateral method of reckoning descent, common descent from a single ancestor, etc.,—in such instances the classificatory system of nomenclature often still persists.

Yet, although the oversupply of positions and functionaries made for whatever degree of bureaucracy existed in the clan organization, it also made for democracy; for, while the non-equivalent positions and prerogatives must not be underestimated, there were so many equivalent ones defined in an inflexible manner, that centralization could make but little headway. Without centralization, of course, no really autocratic authority could develop.

The implications of all these facts led to the emergence of what we may legitimately call an egalitarian ideology of considerable body and influence, one which was characteristically different from the individualism found in most fishing-hunting societies. How strong the egalitarian implications of the clan organization really are can best be gauged by the fact that even where, as in West and East Africa and the Northwest Coast of North America, to mention but a few instances,

a highly stratified society existed—there were even true kings in Africa—these implications of the clan prevented any dangerous centralization from developing and effectively neutralized the degradation of any part of the population into a peon or serf class.

We must now, however, turn to the question of the description of the "external" structure of the clan as opposed to the "internal" structure represented by the classificatory system. But before doing so a few remarks are necessary concerning the actual extensions of the terms used in this system.

To call a father's brother father, a mother's sister mother and their children, brothers and sisters and to have some of these terms continue indefinitely from one generation to another so that, for instance, your cousins tenth degree removed may still be called your brothers and sisters, this flows from no natural compulsive call of the blood or from any normal extension of the immediate family unit. Nor can the opposite tendency, the insistent separation of older brother from younger brother and often, of older sister from younger sister, be explained in this manner, unless we regard this whole intricate combination and separation of individuals as having resulted from the interaction of the discursive and disjunctive workings of the human mind among primitive people. This is, I think, however, a quite unacceptable interpretation.

Only conditions of an imperative nature could have forced the creation of such a system. That these conditions were basically economic, I feel convinced. Whatever these compelling causes were, they apparently called out vigorously for organization, for fixed positions and for a fixed set of mutual obligations and duties. To still further cement the tie between a man and the functions he had to perform, specific types of marriage

were instituted or extended which actually equated, or helped to equate, a father's brother and a mother's sister with the actual father and mother, and so on, i.e., as far as their functions were concerned.

This became stereotyped at a very early period in the history of agricultural societies and was then passed on, naturally undergoing marked alterations in transmission. The types of marriage and certain of the functions that had presumably led to the development of the fundamental equation of particular relatives disappeared but the terminology remained, a situation that led to many inconsistencies and contradictions.

Thus, the terminological equation of specific relatives, where clan organization exists, has now for centuries had associations institutionally and administratively far more important to members of the clan than the question of consanguinity. That has been recognized by all since Rivers' famous work.[8] Only when viewed as a mechanism for organizing and coordinating the traditional prerogatives of individuals associated with fixed positions does it possess any meaning in a functioning society.

The clan is generally thought of as a highly integrated and fixed societal unit. While it is all this structurally, the fact that the children of a brother and a sister must belong to two distinct clans and that even where a village is inhabited by members of the same clan at least a significant number of the inhabitants—

[8] W. H. R. Rivers' *Kinship and Social Organization*, (London, 1914) and Lowie, *op. cit.*, where a detailed and critical evaluation of the work of A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, B. Malinowski, R. Thurnwald and all the members of the so-called *Functionalist* school is given. In passing, the reader should be reminded that, although Rivers first broached this aspect of the subject, he did not actually work it out. Here again we must call attention to the great work of Lévi-Strauss, cf. note p. (p. 196).

the wives or husbands of clan members as the case may be—will have to belong to another clan, this fact implies that it is quite meaningless ever to think of a clan as self-contained politically. It is this contrast between its fictional-symbolical self-sufficiency and its actual political non-sufficiency that must always be remembered when we study its functioning. Nowhere in any clan society have these two aspects of its fundamental structure ever been harmonized. An inherent source of conflict thus lies within the very core of its being.

It must not astonish us, then, to find clans continually clashing and competing, and attempting to set themselves up as distinct and independent entities. Quite naturally they always failed to become such. Nor should it surprise us to find that the fact that no clan could live by itself without ceasing to be a clan had, often, precisely the opposite effect, namely, that of stimulating the development of a larger political unit within which the various clans might be coordinated. Such a coordination entailed, as its consequence, however, the emergence of a new set of officials whose functions and activities revolved around the tribe as such. Although these officials would obviously have to belong to some clan and their allegiance to it would still frequently outweigh all other considerations, in the long run, they would inevitably have to develop wider interests. On a smaller scale it is the age-old struggle between local allegiance and loyalties and national allegiance and loyalties. Here, among primitive peoples, the local loyalties almost always won out and, thus, no true nation or state could easily emerge. Yet these local bonds were not dominant at all times and many situations in the corporate life of the tribe-nation compelled them repeatedly to remain in the background.

There were, consequently, two forces favorable to the

elaboration of tribal institutions; first, the twofold aspect of the clan itself and the consequent need for some outside coordinating mechanism and, second, the conditions of life in a complicated agricultural civilization, where the possibilities for external crises, due to natural agencies or the attacks of enemies, were immeasurably greater than had been the case in food-gathering or fishing-hunting economies.

The tribal-national institutions always consisted of a tribal chief whose office was hereditary in a specific clan, and a rather unorganized council. The authority of a chief varied considerably from tribe to tribe but, at best, it was never great. He had definite prerogatives and he could give orders but, as a rule, he had as many duties to perform as services he could demand. If, however, his authority remained largely nominal that was due mainly to the fact that, except under very unusual conditions, he had no way of enforcing obedience.

Such was the nature of a chief's authority in clan organizations that had no stratified classes. Where stratified classes existed, his authority was theoretically much greater but, generally, there, too, he rarely possessed any real method for enforcing it except by allying himself with ritualistic societies which, at stated intervals, functioned as semi-terroristic police organizations. Even in west and east Africa where true kings can be said to have existed, endowed, theoretically, with absolute power over life and limb, this power was rarely exercised except in connection with slaves, non-tribesmen and individuals who had, for some reason or other, lost their status. There was quite a number of organizations of this kind serving as enforcing agencies, but they were rarely at the disposal of either tribal chief or a king. They certainly were never under his immediate control.

Obedience, among aboriginal peoples, be it remem-

bered, was never enforced by a single well-defined agency or institution. This was due to a variety of causes but, fundamentally it is to be ascribed to the fact that law was not thought of as an individualized *fiat*-command emanating from a particular source and which had then to be carried out at a particular time and in a specified manner. On the contrary, law was conceived of as if it were a traditional non-individualized order, diffused, as it were, over the whole group. It was obligatory to obey it but, then again, it was also obligatory for the "command" to be made. In this way, the more personal aspects of force and coercion never came into play and punishment never took on the form of a coercion exercised by one particular individual upon another. Such a conception was naturally fatal to the development of an executive with well-defined authority.

Little need be said about the tribal council in clan societies. It was not, in any sense, anywhere, a truly legislative body. The famous Iroquois tribal council has often been described as though it actually was such a body. This is exceedingly unlikely. At any rate, such a development was rare. The tribal council was essentially an assembly of elders gathered together for the interchange of views and news. Such a gathering would naturally have great social significance and would, of course, help to neutralize the disruptive localism of the clans. The council, however, never actually made the final decisions, although it clearly must have often brought things to an issue where a decision could afterwards be more easily made by those social-political units in whose hands the right of decision lay.

Up to the present we have been speaking of one aspect of the clan. We come now to the other, its strictly symbolic-fictional side. This is the side that has been

most frequently discussed because it was the first to be described in a larger reference. Its general characteristics have already been mentioned. Here, therefore, only two of these traits will be discussed, the interdiction of marriage within the clan technically called exogamy, and the nature of the relation of its members to the animal whose appellation the clan bore. This last trait of the clan takes us right into the midst of a subject about which an untold number of books has been written and which, ever since its scientific discovery, has had a far-reaching effect upon all histories of religion, indeed, even of civilization, namely, totemism.

Interdiction of marriage outside the group is an old well-known method for preserving purity of blood and the maintenance of a privileged and dominant position. It received its classic expression as an institutionalized unit among the Hindus and the ancient Romans before 300 B.C. The clan-marriage interdiction is, however, the same to this extent; namely that each clan is to be set off as a special unit. It can even be claimed that what might be designated as "purity" of blood is stressed as definitely for the clan as for the caste, the only difference being that in the clan, depending upon whether descent was reckoned in the father's or the mother's line, the blood of one parent was always annulled.

The whole ideological superstructure of the clan—the common animal-ancestor, the frequent taboo against eating the animal represented by the ancestor, the common clan mark, etc., all this was really based upon the conception of blood "purity." People knew very well, of course, that only a certain number of the members of a clan were actually related to them in terms of the classificatory system. But this simply implied, they felt, that some were more distantly related to them than others. No more.

This more distant relationship had, as a matter of fact, certain definite advantages, for with these clan relatives you could be much freer than with the more intimate ones. Toward the latter you owed numerous obligations, and the rules of decorum and respect, hedging you about at all turns were apt to prove both troublesome and irritating. There was, thus, freedom in the clan relationship as well as a willing bondage. There was, besides, the consciousness of belonging to an exclusive group, whose origin lay in a distant past and with which were associated special rituals replete with numerous symbolical and mystical implications.

Two complementary forces existed, then, within the clan structure, making for integration—the smaller more immediate blood-tie and the traditional interacting set of obligations connected with these relatives, and the larger fictitious blood-tie with a complex ideological superstructure in which all shared. We have, here, a self-sufficient world, although a small and somewhat introverted one. Manifestly, had the clan only possessed this side to its nature it could not possibly have endured. We know, of course, that it had another side not so strangely compounded of fact and fiction.

We come now to the relationship of the clan to the animal from whom it generally claimed descent. The subject is much too intricate to be discussed here at length. There was both an equivalence and a non-equivalence, an identity and a non-identity, implicit in the attitude of the members of a clan to the animal from whom they claimed descent.[9] There seems to be little doubt but that the many inconsistencies to be found on these points in the legends, the rituals, the

[9] Actually it may also be a plant or a natural phenomenon, occasionally a place-name or a nickname. However, the overwhelming majority of clans have animal names.

fasting-dreams and the prayers actually reflect the confusion and uncertainty which exist in the minds of people today and which must have existed for some time. The line drawn between animals and human beings, among primitive people, was, we know, not always very great, in theory at least, and symbolism and symbolic clichés played a role not always easy to determine. Yet, after allowing for these disturbing factors, the general impression is that a close bond obtained that had far-reaching implications and which often appeared where one least expected it. Certainly, the members of a clan were always aware of the connection with their clan animal and the relationship between it and themselves was always depicted as one of natural benevolence.

Important, however, as were these implications, the real significance of the tie between the clan and the clan animal lay outside of the clan, namely, in the influence this tie had upon man's whole conception of the animal world, in fact, of the organic world in general. If many of the animals with whom a given people was familiar were thus incorporated into a firmly integrated social unit, this was inevitably bound to result in a new assessment of these animals and the establishment of a new type of coordination between man and them. This expressed itself in the extension to the animals, of part, at least, of the elaborate techniques of behavior and the system of rights and duties which obtained for man. The relation between a food-animal and a human being which was based originally, on a purely magical coercion would, thus, become newly reinterpreted on the analogy of what occurred between human beings, namely, a free interchange that possessed the consecration of tradition.

New problems and new difficulties arose in consequence. If, in theory, a clansman might not eat his clan

animal and, if, nevertheless, the clan animal constituted his main food, what was he to do? Compromises had to be made. Perhaps the two most important solutions of the dilemma were those which either made a distinction between the clan animal and the animal actually eaten or which refused to do so and pictured the eating of the clan animal as a type of vicarious sacrifice. However, we cannot stop to discuss all the fascinating problems that arise in this connection.

Before turning to the last of the social-political structures to be discussed, that of the pastoral nomads, a few remarks about the relative status of men and women in the social-political structures so far discussed would seem in place.

In the fishing-hunting civilizations, we have seen, that while, in general, the equivalence of men and women still holds true, the fact that the food producers are exclusively men weighted the scale definitely in favor of them. That receives a formal expression in the tendency in these civilizations for descent, at times, to be reckoned in the paternal line, insofar as any emphasis is laid upon this matter. In the clan-agricultural civilizations this changes completely. The equivalence between the two sexes, in every respect, becomes the outstanding trait of their civilization. This is not merely due to the fact that the women are, with few exceptions, the food producers, but to the status they receive from belonging to a clan and, from the additional fact that two-thirds of all tribes with a clan organization reckon descent in the female line. Where this latter occurs the weighting of social prestige and of authoritative status is definitely in favor of the woman. Where it does not occur, that is, where descent is reckoned in the paternal line, this disadvantage is completely corrected by her importance in the securing of the food staple and the "legal" recogni-

tion which membership in a clan gives her. Where fishing and hunting exist, associated with a clan organization, her position is still that of a complete equal, in spite of the fact that fishing and hunting are predominantly male occupations. Marriage, in these societies, never affects the status of either of the contracting parties. It is, thus, the clan, plus the role woman plays in agriculture there, which gives her her favored position.

Where her role is only that of food-producer there is a tendency for her status to be lower than that of man. This is, however, not marked, since the economic and political structure of these societies is quite unfavorable to the development of a division of labor that would accentuate great inequalities of this kind.

It is not necessary to say much about the pastoral nomads, for there are few such groups among truly primitive people. With the exception of the northeastern parts of Siberia and the Hottentots of Southwestern Africa, they all existed within the limits of the knowledge of cultivation. Their culture, the northern Siberian tribes and Hottentots excepted, has always been complex and most of them undoubtedly were, at one time, in contact, direct or indirect, with one or the other of the major civilizations that developed in the Mediterranean and Asia after 4000 B.C. Most of them have a clan organization and most of them practice agriculture to a limited extent. As they are constituted at the present day, the evidence of the superimposition of one cultural deposit upon the other meets us at every step. In addition to all this, they frequently represent a conquering group that has succeeded in holding its own only by becoming secondarily reorganized on a military basis. From time immemorial their favorite occupation has been to raid other peoples.

For all these reasons, it is impossible to discover any

traits, beyond that of herding animals and, possibly, the patrilineal clan that they have in common. Each tribe would really have to be treated by itself and that is, of course, bound to be misleading. Nevertheless, they are, even today, too important a group to leave out in any analysis of primitive or semi-primitive societies, quite apart from the tremendous role pastoral-nomads have played in the creation of the great civilization of ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia and the Indus Valley.

It has become the custom among many economists and theorists to speak of the specific psychological attitudes which accompany the pastoral mode of life. They are depicted as intense individualists and as always offering the most marked opposition to a settled mode of life. At the same time, their social organization has been pictured as that of a patriarchal authoritarian system, where the head of a household rules as undisputed master and women are held in complete subjection. Most of these generalizations are, however, incorrect. As Forde has very pertinently pointed out, "Eternal wanderings in which no spot is deliberately sought a second time is never found. Everywhere a unit community, whether it be a kin group, a larger clan or a whole tribe, has a fairly well-defined territory which it oversteps at its own risk just as invaders transgress it at theirs." [10]

Yet it is a fact that the essential instability of nomadism, plus unsettled political conditions, have frequently led to manifold changes and reorganizations of well-defined political units that meant disruption, for varying periods of time. Indeed, this seems to have been the history of numerous pastoral peoples of Asia. They can best be regarded as denuded agriculturists. In such

[10] *Op. cit.*, p. 400.

cases, undoubtedly, a fierce individualism would tend to develop. But it was largely of an undisciplined kind and a reflection of the centripetal forces present in these cultures. It cannot be compared either with the undifferentiated individualism of fishing-hunting communities or the differentiated individualism of many agricultural groups.

Similarly, while it is essentially true that the formal status of women is much lower than in fishing-hunting or agricultural communities, this does not necessarily imply loss of recognition or influence. Besides, where a clan existed, and this was frequently present, a woman had the protection this afforded any other clan member.

Finally, with regard to the fundamental question to which we have had such frequent reference, namely whether, in pastoral societies, the right of all individuals to the irreducible minimum—sufficient food, shelter and clothing—held, that can be answered definitely in the affirmative.

Of the peoples with mixed food economies we have spoken only incidentally. They are not as numerous as has been imagined. But they do, of course, occur, although it is rarely the case to find two basically different methods of food production equally developed in the same tribe until historical times. Among primitive peoples such examples exist primarily on the margin of a particular economic area.

We have already mentioned the mixed fishing-hunting-agricultural tribes. They present no particular problem. The agricultural-pastoral civilizations of large sections of East Africa, on the other hand, do. It is among them that we find all kinds of anomalies that would seriously disturb the picture of primitive social-political life as we have drawn it, if such examples

were numerous and found in many other places. But they are rarely, if ever, found anywhere else and we can legitimately regard the East-African anomalies as due to the disintegrating as well as integrating effects of the many and varied influences that have directly affected that region, from late neolithic times to the twelfth and thirteenth centuries A.D.

The classification of individuals within a clan organization brings us directly to one of the most important aspects of aboriginal societies, the rights and prerogatives of the elders and the conflicting and ambivalent attitude assumed toward them by the younger men. To understand this role of the elders, it is best to discuss it in its possible historical development even if this means indulging, in large measure, in speculation.

On the basis of our evidence, the development seems to have been the following. Even in simple food-gathering cultures, individuals above fifty, let us say, apparently arrogated to themselves certain powers and privileges which benefitted them specifically and were not necessarily, if at all, dictated by considerations either of the rights of others or the welfare of the community. There was, of course, one primary limiting factor: these powers and privileges must never be tantamount to depriving anyone of the necessities of life. That still left, however, a marginal area within which the elders could operate. The younger people, individually and as groups, conceded them these special rights within this marginal region. Whether this is to be interpreted as a free concession or one extorted from them by essentially coercive and terroristic means, it is somewhat difficult to answer. Probably it was a combination of the two.

The two primary prerogatives and privileges of the elders were the rights to the younger women and to a

certain degree of leisure. The first certainly was obtained by essentially terroristic means, however traditionally disguised. All the evidence from these simple societies proves this conclusively. The second, which really means the right to make younger people work for them, seems to have been acceded to, without undue murmurings, as part of the respect due one's elders.

At what time in the evolution of society these elders united, informally or semi-formally, it is again not so easy to answer. But it is not speculating unduly to assume that such a coalition, if we may use this term, took place very early, if for no other reason than that the position of these elders was by no manner of means too secure. For this there were three main reasons: first, they were likely to become a distinct liability to the group in periods of crisis; secondly, they almost always functioned as medicine-men of some kind or another and suffered from all the risks attendant upon the exercise of this profession; and thirdly, one of their main prerogatives, the right to the possession of the younger women was, as we indicated, based on manifest coercing.

In the food-gathering economies, the elders enforced their role principally through their control of the education of the children, by their functions as medicine-men and sorcerers and by the influence in councils. This was a difficult combination for the younger people to successfully combat. They could not unite. They accordingly acquiesced, presumably on the principle that has played so great a role in the attitude of young people toward the privileges of the elders everywhere and at all times, namely with the consolation that some day they would be the elders.

So much for the nature of the role of the elders' among the food-gatherers. Among the fishing-hunting tribes two new elements added to their strength: first,

the systematization and validation of their prerogatives and privileges; and secondly, the prominence and prestige possessed when they were younger as great hunters and warriors. This was offset to a certain degree by the fact that the systematization of the obligations due them was merely the obverse of that of the obligations they owed the younger people. Moreover, the prestige attached to prowess in fishing and hunting and prowess in war became so important a factor that the younger people could make as great demands for extra privileges as their seniors. The elders, to judge from the situation in the majority of the hunting tribes, thereupon concentrated their efforts upon securing control of whatever religious and magical machinery the community happened to possess in order to retain their prerogatives. That particular prerogative, however, which they had, in the past, enforced by coercion, the right to the possession of the younger women, they had to resign. Coercion and intimidation they still employed but to a much more limited extent and only for economic advantages and for the enhancement of their social prestige.

Agriculture plus the clan organization still further mitigated the terroristic side of their powers, that is, insofar as they were supposed to belong to men by virtue of their age-seniority. The question of age-seniority thus became one of a large number of elements and by no means the most important one, by virtue of which they received special privileges and the opportunity—it was no longer a right—to indulge in coercion. Their main strength, in clan-agricultural societies lay in the rituals and ritualistic societies which they largely controlled. One of the most intricate and interesting of the social ritualistic mechanisms they can be said to have devised for this purpose is the age-grading principle, by

means of which all that was most worth while in prestige and wealth finally found itself in the hands of the older people.

Apart from the special grades in the age-societies, the elders never were organized formally. It was quite different, however, in the case of those engaged in professions like the practice of shamanism, sorcery or curing. Members of these professions banded themselves together informally even in the simplest food-gathering civilizations. As soon as the clan political patterns emerged we find them formally united together, either in one group or separately. The organizations which they formed were generally secret and played a tremendous role in some areas in enforcing order.

This was particularly true in West Africa and Melanesia but it was by no means absent in the two Americas. This enforcement of order was often accompanied by traditionally and non-traditionally sanctioned acts of violence and terrorism as was to be expected. Yet, by and large, the disruptive tendencies were not marked, except perhaps in West Africa. The importance of these associations and societies lay in the fact that they served, in a rough fashion, as semi-official bodies with recognized police and judicial functions. This was a welcome asset to tribal structures where the coercive aspect of the constituted authority was extremely poorly developed.

Equal in importance to the above as examples of informal and formal groupings of people with special qualifications and interest were, of course, the military organizations which are found widely scattered over the earth. Their primary purposes were generally strictly social, the securing of additional prestige and status. Only where warfare took on larger aspects, and was not fundamentally concerned with either revenge or the at-

tainment of prestige, can it be said that these military groupings and societies exercised any real political influence as such. They rarely developed into institutions concerned specifically, for instance, with the defense of the tribe or the village. Under certain conditions such as tribal hunts, tribal war-parties, extensive travels and migrations, the functions and powers of these organizations were not infrequently augmented to such an extent that they were actually in complete control temporarily and entrusted with arbitrary power to enforce their commands. But this, apparently, never resulted in giving them increased political or police powers in normal times.

There are exceptions, notably among the Plains Indians of the United States. A "warrior" civilization, such as that of the Masai of East Africa, is a very special development properly connected with the special history of the Masai and their role as alien invaders.

The majority of aboriginal tribes possessed no groupings of individuals based on true class distinctions. Slaves not a few of them had but, while their lives were insecure because they had no status, they were never systematically forced to do menial work or regarded as an inferior and degraded class in our sense of the term. There were, however, a considerable number of tribes, with a wide distribution, whose populations were divided into nobles and commoners. Such tribes were rare in North and South America, always excepting, of course, the great Mexican, Central American and Peruvian cultures. They were common in Africa and Oceania. In other parts of the world their occurrence was sporadic.

Because these social stratifications occur almost exclusively in the highly elaborated civilization of West and East Africa and the equally elaborate cultures of the Micronesians and Polynesians, among those peoples,

in other words, who can legitimately be regarded as having been profoundly influenced by the great major cultures of Africa and Asia, they are only qualifiedly to be included as typical of primitive peoples proper. Apart from the presence of class-stratification, and its implications, however, they undoubtedly are primitive as contrasted with the major civilizations of Europe, Africa and Asia, their secondary accretions to the contrary, notwithstanding.

The noteworthy fact of all these class-stratifications, which sets them off from the type to which we are accustomed, is that, even in the very few instances where the lower class is compelled to do certain specific work and where no contact of any kind may take place between the noble ruling group and the commoners, the actual difference in the standard of living is not very great. It would never occur to a Micronesian or Polynesian noble, for instance, that, because his person was sacrosanct and that one group was traditionally constrained to till the ground,[11] this gave him either the right or the power to deprive the latter of a fair share in all the major prerogatives and even pleasures of life, or that it was essential for them to live on a much lower material plane. All that it seems to have meant, at best, was that two groups of the same civilization existed side by side, and that one group was traditionally constrained to till the soil and give the products to the other group and that the tillers of the soil were looked down upon with profound contempt and regarded as socially inferior by the other group. This seems all we have a right to say. Subjection in the sense in which the serf and villein of the Middle Ages were subjected to their lords, of that

[11] That was by no means common, incidentally, either in Micronesia or Polynesia.

there is no trace.[12] An example from one of the Caroline Islands in Micronesia will best show the nature of the class—or caste—stratification and the manner in which it works.

On the island of Kusae[13] all the land belonged theoretically to the king who divided it "in fief" to the titular chiefs who, in turn, distributed it, through a group of subordinate chiefs, to the people living in their districts. This looks, on the face of it, like a typically feudalistic system. Yet, ownership of the land by the king was apparently more in the nature of a fiction than anything else, for "private property" was definitely recognized and land could not be disposed of in any case. Land was personally heritable and was passed on in the mother's line. People had the right to settle where they pleased.

Under such conditions it seems somewhat far-fetched to speak of feudalism here. No system of villeinage could possibly develop where there was such freedom of movement. But, if the commoners were not chained to the land, they were, nevertheless, compelled to till the soil for the nobles and to see to it that the titular chiefs were provided with fresh food-stuffs every day. For these food deliveries the commoners were never recompensed. Since, in addition, these titular chiefs, in other words, the nobles, could demand that the commoners build canoes and houses for them and selected the members of their domestic establishments—kawa-brewers, kawa-bearers, cooks, food-bearers and canoe-crews—from among the

[12] It is very important to remember that all our sources about the functioning of these societies come from members of the noble class. We are not, for that reason, always in a position to know the extent to which many of their claims represented theory or actual fact.

[13] R. Thurnwald, *op. cit.*

inhabitants of their districts, on the face of things, again, we would seem to have here an example of the complete subordination of one class to another.

Yet it would be completely erroneous to draw such a conclusion and for the following reasons. The commoners were not restricted to one particular occupation. They could be farmers, artisans, traders. While it is true that no recompense was given for the food delivered, all other services were "paid for." In fact, it was not quite true that no recompense was given for all food deliveries. When special deliveries were demanded, the chief had to pay for them.

Thus, the chief took care of all the individuals, together with their families, who were in charge of the care of his household. Canoe-builders, house-builders and fishermen had to be recompensed by paying them in the form of feasts, valuables and money. In short, there were numerous occasions on which the nobles had to make what actually, in less complex aboriginal societies, amounted to return-gifts.

The picture we get of the situation at Kusae is, then, not so much then that of a feudalistic society as that of an institutionalized division of labor, secondarily complicated by the fact that there are two classes between whom intermarriage is forbidden, and by the additional fact that the nobles and commoners are, and must remain, geographically separated, the former living on one island and the latter on another.

The conditions are very much the same in all the other tribes where stratified classes exist. If, in Samoa, the "princes" had theoretically the right to take whatever they wished from the people, in practice this meant little more than saying they were entitled to certain privileges and gifts. In other words, it is the expression of a definite theory of exchange. In this exchange, mats

were used as a type of currency. A paramount chief would pay the commoners with these mats for what he received and they would again be returned to the chief on special ceremonial occasions. Thus, they were kept in continuous circulation between the chiefs and the people.

Only in West and East Africa do we find instances that possess some of the characteristic traits of a true feudalistic society. There, an extensive system of slavery existed and a class with marginal social-legal status had developed, such as hostages, bondsmen, and "pawns," not to speak of refugees. The situation is far too complicated to take up here. It might be said in passing, however, that, in spite of the tendency for this marginal class to approximate more and more to the status of serfs and of slaves and to take on substantially the position such individuals once had in our own societies, two characteristics of these African semi-authoritarian states prevented the development of any real under-privileged group in our sense of the term. These are the existence of clan organizations and the persistence of the conception of the nature of property as found in all aboriginal tribes.

It is unquestionably due to the influence of the causes mentioned above that we find even in the "feudalistic" tribes of Africa the theory that, while the land may belong theoretically to the king, he only holds it as the representative of the people at large; that a local chief is merely the agent of the community; that profits from work done in common are to be used immediately in payments to the community at large and to defray communal expenditures. Thus, they counteract whatever forces had developed to disrupt the acceptance of the fundamental right of every person to the irreducible minimum—food, shelter and clothing.

chapter nine

THE LAW AND ITS FICTIONS

So accustomed has the western european become, during the last five thousand years, to the idea that a law is something which depends for its efficacy upon the fact that it is written down and emanates from some fixed source of authority, that it is almost impossible for him to believe that it does not lose much of its force and validity where neither writing nor such a fixed authority exists. How, otherwise, can a law be given that restrictive form which differentiates it from a traditionally imposed custom? Custom, so it is contended, seems to differ from law for this precise reason, that its source cannot be traced back to anything more individualized than the group and that its enforcement depends upon the

same unindividualized authority. Moreover, a written or inscribed law is a public document and no one can plead ignorance of its contents, for it is always there to confront a man, whereas a custom is public only by implication and a person may plead ignorance of it without being subsequently confronted by as strong evidence to the contrary as a written document provides.

Actually, there is no justification for this contrast, but it would be futile to attempt to refute directly the arguments advanced above, for they touch on some of the fundamental differences between our conception of the nature of law and that of primitive man. We, for instance, think of a law as something which must be given specific external form to make it authentic and valid. Primitive man, at times, also makes requirements of this nature but not for his laws and customs but for magical spells and rites. Similarly, we insist that a law has no validity unless it emanates from someone who has the right to promulgate it and the power to enforce it.

In other words, a law must contain the threat that, if it is not obeyed, coercion will be used. Aboriginal man, on the contrary, believes that the right of a person to make certain demands—let us phrase it this way for the moment, even if the right and the power to do so are granted, constitutes only part of the conditions necessary for a law. It will not be given the validity we associate with law if any of the demands fail to respect certain basic rights of the group and, above all, if they contain a threat of coercion. If they contain such demands, from their point of view, the first requisite for a law is gone. If they imply coercion, the whole demand is meaningless, for coercion is a function of the group or of tradition, not of an individual, except on specified occasions and for specific needs. However, it is the "specific need" and the "specific occasion" that contain within them the nature

of the real distinctions which exist between our conception of the meaning and purpose of law and that of primitive man.

Perhaps the difference will come out clearly by means of an example. Among the Winnebago Indians where a man's freedom to do what he wants to, if he takes the consequences, is never normally interfered with, there are, nevertheless, certain situations where rules which have all the implications of our laws exist. These are connected with his freedom of action when on a large war party. Authority, on such an occasion, is delegated to a war-chief and he formulates the rules that hold for the expedition. These rules have been handed down by tradition, it is true. They are customary rules. But it is the war-chief who gives them the form of laws, by making them specific. He does so by informing everyone what the specific conditions are, announcing what consequences will follow if the rules are not obeyed and delegating to special individuals authority to act as police-officers. As soon as the war-party has returned these laws immediately revert to their old status of customs and, if an individual has been punished for any infraction of them during the time that they obtained, he is recompensed in some way or other for having been deprived of his freedom of action.

In other words, the laws here are what we would designate as emergency laws. Now this is what all laws are as distinguished from customs among primitive peoples. To put it in another way, a law is a custom that, for the moment, is individualized and given a specified and restrictive form and an overt coercive force in the interests of the community at large and the individual in particular. It thus exists only to satisfy the needs of a given situation. But, if customs can thus become laws almost at a moment's notice, custom or what customary law must

obviously mean is something quite different there from what it is among us. Let us, therefore, attempt some description of the meaning and function of custom among primitive peoples. A few of its aspects, as a matter of fact, have already been briefly touched upon.

It is extremely unfortunate that the term custom has ever been used in connection with aboriginal civilizations. Inevitably we import the implications it has in our own culture into theirs. And that is fatal. Among us a custom is, on the whole, something we submit to because it is, for many reasons, easier to do so than not. Our submission takes the form of a mild compulsion in some cases and what appears to be a blind coercion in other cases, as among many peasants, for instance. A custom is, in no sense, a part of our properly functioning culture. It belongs definitely to the past. At best, it is moribund. But customs are an integral part of the life of primitive peoples. There is no compulsive submission to them. They are not followed because the weight of tradition overwhelms a man. That takes place in our culture, not in that of aboriginal man. A custom is obeyed there because it is intimately intertwined with a vast living network of interrelations, arranged in a meticulous and ordered manner. They are tied up with all the mechanisms used in government. Some of them are customs in our sense of the term, moribund and functionless, others are continually being transformed into emergency laws while others function yet never become emergency laws.

It is this dynamic functioning of customs that gives them their importance and validity. A man does not obey the customs of his elders because a rigid tradition forces him to do so but because he is convinced that they have worked in the case of his elders. If they do not work he is apt to abandon them or allow them to become moribund.

Under these conditions it is a hopeless task to attempt to contrast custom, as such, with law. The best we can do is to think of them as rules and regulations, depending upon particular situations for the meaning and authority which they are to possess and for the manner in which they are to function.

Our discussion of law and custom has brought us face to face with the major problem of all ordered societies: where does authority reside and what is its nature? For primitive societies this can be approached best by calling attention again to the nature of the prerogatives which certain individuals enjoy and the extent to which they contain the essential traits of authority, that is, the right to issue commands and the power to enforce them. This we have discussed before in large part. There we pointed out that whatever authority flowed from the possession of certain prerogatives and privileges was part of a diffused power inhering in certain positions that were inherited, that is, in the sense that they belonged, in every generation, to specific relatives. It was thus shared with others and dependent upon the particular personal relationship existing between relatives for its efficacy.

Under these conditions it could not, of course, become individualized, "personalized," or localized. The prerogatives belonged to the position, not the position to the prerogatives, and they were part of a traditionally fixed series of mutual obligations and duties. Their exercise, accordingly, did not possess the elements necessary for creating a situation wherein it would be recognized that one person was to be obeyed and the other to obey or that the former had the authority to enforce his will upon the latter.

Yet, without this precise recognition, authority in our sense of the term can hardly be said to exist. In addition

to the above, the possessors of these prerogatives, since they were theirs by birth, had no way of specifically validating them other than by performing the duties of their "office" properly. This was a somewhat weak type of validation compared, for instance, to the validation demanded and expected for all those prerogatives and privileges enjoyed by individuals which did not inhere in the fact of blood-relationship and that gave a man power and prestige. Authority without a formal and public validation and authentication at specified times had, among most primitive peoples, little force. A clear-cut distinction seems to have been drawn among them between the right to inherit authority and the right to exercise it.

If, then, a separation is made between the legal possession of authority and the right to exercise it, two things inseparably associated among us, on what basis is this done? What theory underlies it? The answer seems to be that death or certain other events are regarded as temporarily suspending its exercise by anybody until certain facts have been determined. This, it may be objected, is, after all, the same among ourselves. The difference, however, is that, among primitive peoples, authority on such an occasion is thought of either as reverting to the group or of simply becoming essentially invisible. It remains invisible until it is retransferred to another individual. Visible continuity, that is, continuity in our sense of the term, does not exist. That does not, however, mean that there is no sense of continuity. Obviously there is, but it is the organized group that is continuous not a specific individual, a position with its prerogatives, not the temporary holder of the position.

The individual possessors of prerogatives and authority are really unimportant, in spite of all their pretensions to the contrary and their naïve blustering and self-

importance. Indeed all the egotistical blustering in which they indulge can be interpreted, psychologically, as a reflection of the fact that they unconsciously realize that their power is but for a day, that they are essentially marionettes and that the group towers above them and contains them just as it towered above and contained their fathers and will tower above and contain their children.

The group, then, is the only authority that has real existence. We must, of course, guard ourselves against thinking of the group in any metaphysical or mystical sense. It is a very concrete entity consisting of individuals bound together by an intricate system of visible and invisible ties and with a definite structure. That structure can best be understood by viewing it as a frame of reference having both spatial and dynamic or processual endpoints delimited, the one, by the culturally determined range of variability manifested in the form and content of the society, the other, by a temporal extension expressing itself in liens with the past and goals and aims for the future. It is within this system of ties and this structure that authority resides. An individual possesses it only to the extent to which it has been delegated to him. Strictly speaking, authority is only leased to a man and, while this lease may be in terms of many generations, the source from which the authority has come is never forgotten.

Under these conditions, it is clearly of paramount importance to know what the nature of the lease is and what stipulations it contains. In some cases the lease may be a perpetual transference of power, as in connection with the prerogatives attached to certain blood-relationships. But this is never of a generalized kind. In other cases the lease may be perpetual, as where chieftainship, for instance, is restricted to a specific clan and

to a particular family within the clan. But what is thus given with one hand is taken away with the other, for the authority of a chief is largely if not wholly symbolical. He is never the promulgator of laws and ordinances and he never possesses the mechanism for enforcing them against recalcitrants. He often, in fact, simply represents a convenient fiction. That is fundamentally what is meant, when, for instance, among the Tonga Islanders, it is said that the power of the subordinate chiefs is derived from the overlord but that, after he has once conferred it, it cannot be revoked; or that all the land of the island of Kusae in the Carolines belonged to the king and yet that it was private and personally heritable. It is this fictional nature of the authority of the native African kings that has prevented true personal authority from ever taking firm roots and which probably accounts for the fact that we have no instances of tyrants, in the Greek sense, ever occurring there. The economic-political conditions in Africa were unusually favorable for such a violent seizure of power.

There is, however, no need in multiplying instances to show that all real power and authority resides in the group. With this clearly in mind, let us turn to an examination of some of the more permanent of its delegations of power, particularly those connected with the chief and the king.

In both cases, the authority they possess has certain peculiar qualities, as we have seen. Its function is to state the "laws of the land" and to personify them, not primarily to enforce them; to stand above the battle of life, not to participate in it. That is why, in so many tribes, particularly in the Americas, a chief is essentially an intermediary between warring factions, a symbol of peace. In many cases, instead of himself punishing a criminal, he, in a sense, takes the crime upon himself

and pre-enacts both the punishment to be received and the atonement that is to be made.

Let us take the Winnebago tribal chief as representative. He must be a man of well-balanced temper, not easily provoked, and of good habits. Under no conditions can he lead a war-party. His lodge is an asylum for all wrongdoers. No one can be killed there. A prisoner who has succeeded in making his escape to it must be spared. Even a dog destined for a sacrifice obtains his freedom if he takes refuge there. He always acted as intercessor between wrongdoers and their avengers. Even in so extreme a case as the murder of a clansman, he always attempts a reconciliation by which the life of the murderer might be spared. If necessary, he mortifies himself and, with skewers inserted in his back, has himself led through the village to the home of the nearest kinspeople of the murdered man. If he feels that a war-party is taking too many risks he takes his pipe and places it across the path of the person contemplating what he considers an unwarranted undertaking and thus signifies his disapproval. If, then, the war-party starts out, any mishap is directly chargeable to the leader.

Characteristics like these just mentioned for the Winnebago tribal chief are found in the majority of American Indian tribes. Even the head chief of the sophisticated civilization of the Aztecs possessed them. They demonstrate clearly the symbolical nature of the authority inhering in this position and how completely it had its roots in the sovereignty of the group.

This is equally manifest in the case of both the Micronesian-Polynesian and the African kings. One example from the latter must suffice.

Legal and ceremonial fictions and symbolisms are piled upon one another in such great profusion in connection with African kingship that it is often a hopeless task to

attempt to disentangle them. In this welter of fictions and symbolisms the actual holder really becomes unimportant as an individual. Among the Yoruba, for instance, the king or, better, the priest-chief, is simply the visible embodiment of the group as such, with functions laid down for him and carefully supervised by an intricate bureaucratic organization of officials.

Because he is the symbol of the group and entrusted with the performance of the rituals upon which the prosperity of all depends, he has lost all freedom of action and can be deposed comparatively easily. He is surrounded by individuals, generally the chiefs of towns and villages, whose duty it is both to see that he fulfills his function as the symbolical authority of the tribe and yet never attempts to convert that fiction into a practical reality. This is what is meant when he is charged with abuse of authority and this, in fact, as much as any religious beliefs, is what underlies the custom of compelling him to commit suicide when his health fails. For then, most emphatically, the fiction is becoming converted into an isolated fragment of reality. That there are other elements of a more materialistic nature also involved here Evans-Pritchard in a recent pamphlet has demonstrated conclusively.[1] It is this same fundamental objection to the fiction and symbol ever taking on any true corporeality that prevents the priest-king's son from ever succeeding him and which accounts for the former custom of having him put to death at the obsequies of his father.

In a sense, this separation of the actual holder of authority from the actual wielder of authority runs through the whole system of Yoruba government. However, as we descend in the series from priest-king to the headman of

[1] *The Divine Kingship of the Shilluk of the Nilotic Sudan,* Frazer Lecture, Cambridge University Press (1948).

a compound, the contrast becomes increasingly less that between a political-legal fiction and a political-legal reality and more that between two political-legal realities: the authority of chiefs with local and circumscribed jurisdiction and that permanent and inexhaustible reservoir and source of all authority, the organized group. Theoretically and fictionally, the executive and legal authority are in the same hands, but since no offence against a chief's authority is a criminal act—it is only against the group that crimes can be committed—the adjudication of guilt and the nature of punishment reverts, in the last analysis, to the group. A litigant conducts his own case and all cases are heard in public. Forde completely misunderstands the true situation and is injecting a white man's superciliousness and unwarranted cynicism into it when he says that "They (the cases) . . . are one of the main entertainments of the people (and) the judge, although he has power to punish any disturbance during the hearing, is sensitive to public opinion and realizes that his reputation depends on fair dealing and on his ability to reconcile disputants." [2] What is here called public opinion is the authority of the group delegated temporarily to the bystanders that they may supervise the functions of the judge-chief and see that he does not transcend the powers granted him. His reputation does not depend upon fair dealing and on his ability to reconcile disputants. That is his primary function. When the group feels that he is not fulfilling this function properly, then he is threatened with deposition or possibly death unless he mends his ways.

We cannot go into more details here. The explanation of why the holder of authority is either never the actual wielder of authority or so only under specified conditions

[2] *Op. cit.*, p. 162.

and under continual surveillance must now be clear. Authority like property and, for that matter, law, too, is never static. In a sense, it circulates just as much as does property. It is this "circulation of authority" that makes it so difficult for a European to understand it and to believe that any real organization of law and justice exists. Actually, the danger always was present, particularly in civilizations like those of Africa and Micronesia-Polynesia, that this non-localization of authority might lead to a growth of terrorism and the development of an extra-legal, essentially anti-social, superstructure arrogating to itself power and authority.

Such superstructures, in the form of secret societies, were, as a matter of fact, common in many parts of the world, although they attained their highest development in West Africa and certain parts of Melanesia. Perhaps the most famous of them all is the *Ogboni* society of the Yoruba. It has branches scattered throughout the land, in every village and town. Its membership consists of the heads of the more important families so that it really represents one of the methods employed by the elders to retain their ancient prerogatives. Yet although, theoretically, the *Obgoni* claims for itself the power of intervening in any question and of determining the policy of the priest-king, actually the main occasions on which its members intervene in the administration of justice are prescribed. It does, on the other hand, at times indulge in unauthorized and essentially vigilante activities.

The size of the society and its composition, however, militate strongly against any act of true usurpation of power, for, after all, we are dealing here with the individuals who, outside of the society, are either the semi-symbolic holders of authority or the actual wielders of such. The same forces that restrict them there will re-

strict them within the society. They have, it is true, one distinctive function that the chiefs and subchiefs do not possess, the right and the means for effectively punishing offenses. The manner in which this can be utilized for purposes of economic exploitation I have described in a previous chapter. This is, however, generally used in connection with offenses against the tribe and this is done either as a delegated agent of the community or in cooperation with the chiefs. How purely fictitious is the society's claim to the right of authority is best indicated by the fact that there is no attempt to authenticate this right. Without such authentication, however, any exercise of power falls into the class of anti-social activities with which the group had its own way of dealing.

In short, the attempts made to localize authority led ultimately, among all primitive tribes, either to fictions like a sacrosanct chief or priest-king or to anti-social vigilante organizations like secret societies.[3] All of which only reenforces the correctness of our analysis that the two main components of true sovereignty, the recognized right to formulate commands and to enforce them, were never delegated by the group to a person, but always remained in its own possession.

Yet, in spite of the essentially fictional nature of the localization of authority, primitive man seems always to have been deeply interested in investing it with all the paraphernalia of reality or, at least, the paraphernalia derived from the realm of reality. There is a fundamental reason for his doing so. After all, the social mechanism functions through individuals. An intricate and well-coordinated system of privileges and prerogatives, duties and obligations, bound them together. Besides this, every type of government demands a certain economy of organi-

[3] This was, of course, only one aspect of their functions.

zation and, for this purpose, must utilize fictions and symbols.

There is, however, still another element that enters insistently into the situation in the case of primitive man that must not be overlooked, although it cannot be more than touched upon here, namely this, that he lives on a number of levels of reality. So, of course, do many millions of civilized people. The difference, of course, is that, among us, there are many individuals who realize that there is but one reality and that it can be validated only in one manner. Among aboriginal peoples no such group existed. The data that modern science has placed at our disposal which permits us to make the correct analysis was not present. In fact, there was no urgent need, on their part, even to attempt an analysis for separating what was real from what was unreal. Primitive man was interested only in validating consciousness in all of its manifestations, the waking state, as well as dreams, phantasies and mental aberrations. When one passed from the waking to the dream state, one passed from one type of reality to another. Much the same happened when one passed from the direct and immediate relationship to men and objects, to the symbolical one. "All that man can see of the sky," a Dakota philosopher is quoted as saying, "is the blueness," implying that there is something else there. Similarly it might be said "All that one can see in the chief or the king is a man with the attributes of power. But something else exists there too. He may not act as we do; he is not free as we are; he is real and not real." In short our primitive philosopher might add, "We are in the presence of another reality, different from the ordinary workaday one, and one which is as valid as the workaday one."

This seems unadulterated mysticism to us. Perhaps it is, in a sense. Yet aboriginal man, in contradistinction

to our mystics, neither regards this mysticism as more valid than other forms of reality nor does he live in it. But even more important is the fact that the mystic reality and the workaday reality never intermingle, never fuse and are never confused, the one with the other. Primitive man, consequently, sees no contradiction in the fact that the holder of authority does not really exercise it. If his holding authority is in the nature of a fiction and a symbol, then his exercise of it should only be in the nature of a fiction and a symbol. Let us, accordingly, turn to the problem of how primitive man validates the symbolical authority of a chief or a king or, in fact, any institution in which authority is vested.

No legal-political right of any kind among primitive people, it can be categorically stated, is recognized as possessing practical validity unless properly validated and authenticated, always excepting, of course, the obligations and duties subsisting between relatives. But these are not, strictly speaking, personal rights. The form such an authentication takes varies tremendously from tribe to tribe, depending upon the nature of the rights and the practical consequences flowing from their exercise.

The emoluments, material and immaterial, accruing to an individual from the possession of rights and authority depend, in the last analysis, just as we saw was the case in property rights, upon the uses to which it is put. But there is this great difference between the two. An owner of an object or a privilege may be so only indirectly and his rights to the disposal of it may be hedged about and circumscribed by numerous restrictions. He, himself, is never a fiction or a symbol. The "owner" of authority or of any political-legal right, however, is frequently such a fiction. Authentication and validation have, as their main purpose, the strengthen-

ing of the usefulness of this fiction and the establishment of methods for preventing the temporary personification of the fiction from contradicting it, as well as translating the fiction into an actual contemporary reality.

Chiefs and kings are, accordingly, overwhelmed with symbols of authority. They are given both a symbolical investiture and a symbolical deprivation of authority and they are translated, more and more, from an earthly to a heavenly realm. This constitutes the authentication of the fiction and is almost always a public religious ritual of great solemnity. There is no need of giving examples. There are two excellent ones in the contemporary world which will undoubtedly occur to everyone, the King of England and the Mikado of Japan, particularly the latter. The difference between the modern and the primitive instances is that, in the modern, the individuals who wield the actual authority have succeeded in utilizing the phantom-king for their own specific interests. Their success is due, of course, to the structure of their society. In the primitive groups, their analogues, particularly in Africa, attempted the same thing at times, but the structure of their society prevented it. Only when the basis of that society was destroyed by the influence of the Europeans, after the seventeenth century A.D., was it successful.

The creation of symbols for authenticating the rights of the holder of authority to his office meant, secondarily, the creation of positions to take care of the symbols. Thus, authentication and organization necessarily went hand in hand and, since we are here largely in the realm of magic, religion and ritual, both served the purposes of the medicine-man and priest for gaining greater importance. Unquestionably, the whole elaboration of the symbolism and not a little of the symbolism itself were their creation. Thus was provided that entering

wedge of the priest into the political organization which was destined to have such momentous consequences for the history of the world after 3000 B.C.

Although, as we have just seen, the organization of the symbols of authority led indirectly to the creation of positions which played into the hands of the real wielders of authority, this was, after all, only incidental. Let us, therefore, see the extent to which the actual wielders of authority were organized.

Compared to the authentication of the symbolic holders of authority, that for the individuals who actually exercised it was generally thin and drab. Where the hereditary principle was strongly developed, in Africa and Polynesia, for instance, the all-important point was, as among us, the transfer of this authority from the dead man to his successor, a transfer that had to be public. The following description by an eye witness indicates, with unmistakable clearness, how definitely authority always reverts to the group when the particular wielder of it dies.[4]

> "Then the incoming chief emerged from his seclusion in the *Ombala* ("chief's village"), and prepared to receive the insignia of office from the dead chief and his counsellors. He took his stand facing the corpse. . . . After a short speech, declaring that he had not merited the honor awarded him, the incipient chief commenced an interlocution with the corpse. . . . The interrogations are on this wise: 'You, my father, our chief: I have been chosen chief by the people in your place. I am not worthy of that position . . . Is there anything that I have done that may prevent my acceptance of the rulership of this people? Have

[4] Quoted from *"The Story of Chisamba"* (Toronto, 1904), in W. C. Willoughby *The Soul of the Bantu* (New York, 1928), pp. 54-55.

> I done evil that discredits me from being chief in your stead? Speak, I pray you, and let the people know if I am unworthy . . .' The interrogation is continued in the same manner and answered in the same way (i.e., by the corpse being made to lunge forward) until it is fully ascertained that the choice of the people entirely meets the wishes of the dead chief."

There is very little pomp and circumstance in such a transfer. All that takes place simply represents a public testimonial that the individual in question is by blood entitled to the position, is morally fit and has the approval of the group and of his predecessor. No more is ever required. There is no announcement of what he intends to do, what policy he will pursue, how he intends to enforce his will. That is all laid out for him by the law of the land and the basic internal structures of his society which administer the laws.

Thus we come back to a point we have already made repeatedly that the wielders of authority have legally only delegated rights terminating at stated intervals.

From our point of view, particularly from that of an American, this is indeed a curious and topsy-turvy world: the individual in whom all power is centralized is a symbol and prevented from exercising what is so solemnly and reverently bestowed upon him, and the individual who does exercise power is inducted into this power with scant ceremony because, at bottom, instead of giving orders he must take them himself.

The result of such a system, we would claim, could only mean one thing, namely, that to really exercise personal power a man would have to seize it illegally or, at least, surreptitiously. That is precisely what happens in our own system. It happened, after a fashion, in many primitive societies as well but not with the same results.

It is necessary to understand these in order to understand the legal-political structure of primitive peoples because they are aspects of primitive life that strike the casual white observer immediately and are largely responsible for the impression he frequently gets of lawlessness and anarchy. To the serious observer they may not appear such, but they certainly will strike even him as strange in contrast to the basic structure of the tribe, with its insistent stress on societal equilibrium and integration. An example from Samoa when its civilization was still functioning will illustrate this best.

The highest political position in Samoa was that in which certain titles were invested. As usual in such cases, the actual power inhering in this position was in inverse proportion to its ceremonial status. The position was not inherited, the holder being elected to it through the family or whatever political unit happened to control the title. In approved Polynesian style, this was determined "according to the rank of his father and mother and their families, his order of birth, his personal fitness, and his ability to influence, ingratiate or control those having a say in the bestowal of the honor. He was both a trustee and a figurehead for those who raised him and who, if necessary, had the power of deposing him."[5] Yet in spite of the ceremonial and symbolic importance of such a supreme chief all his activities were completely controlled by a set of officials called *tulafale* (orators), the so-called "talking chiefs," who determined his successors, decided his marital affiliations, hedged him about with ceremonial restrictions, developed particular forms of speech for him and established the rule that he could only speak through orators on all formal occasions.[6] These

[5] F. M. Keesing, Modern Samoa, Stanford University (1934), pp. 54-55.
[6] Keesing, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

orators had, in short, practically seized the person of the head chief in much the same way in which the shoguns of Japan gained control of the Mikado after the twelfth century A.D.

The extra-legal character of this seizure of authority is indicated by the fact that, although the orators belonged to the upper caste and were firmly entrenched in power and were well organized,[7] they realized, apparently, that there was no way of authenticating it. Their ambition was, consequently, simply to control the titles and get what they could by their "sale." To maintain their power they had to utilize every emergency that arose, the death or deposition of the incumbent of some high title, for instance, conflicts developing in connection with rights to precedence, and what not. Yet, in spite of all the numerous elements that made for disunity and disruption, the orators never succeeded either in gaining effective control of the machinery of government or of legalizing their right to the power they possessed. In practical matters the local groups were in control and the well-knit orator organizations found themselves compelled to occupy their time with little besides ceremonials and warfare.

What it was in the political-legal organization of the village that prevented personal seizures of power from ever taking on aspects dangerous to the group authority the following brief sketch should make clear.

Each village had a council composed of men holding titles of rank. In theory they were dominated by the

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[7] "As with the chiefs, the orators varied through all gradations of rank and power, and had their appropriate seats as *matais* in the hierarchy of councils. There must especially be noted a number of orator-chiefs who combined in their titles the powers of both orators and chiefs and bore great political weight." Keesing, *op. cit.*, p. 56.

most influential families and the holders of the important titles. But theory was, after all, only theory. In addition to this council of influential families and title-holders, there were three supplemental organizations which were supposed to aid. These were, first, the wives of the chiefs and the orators; second, a society composed of untitled youths and men having its own council modelled on that of the village council proper and, third, a society of unmarried and unattached girls and women. The society of youths and men formed the main work force of the village; that of the unmarried and unattached girls participated in some of the actual work and in certain rituals. The feeling of solidarity of the members of the men's society was further strengthened by the fact that they ate and slept together.

Against a democratic organization of this type, correlated as it was with a ceremonial unity based on certain paramount chief titles, a personal usurpation of power could make no headway. Unorganized, it inevitably became, in the course of time, merely another part of the traditional system. And, just because it was extralegal, it soon found itself enmeshed in almost as many fictions and symbols as was the possessor of authority, the paramount chief, whose person it so effectively controlled. Here, again, the parallelism with the shogunate of Japan is striking.

We have dwelt at this length upon the attempts made by primitive societies to transfer authority to specific individuals as individuals, in order to show how they failed and why they failed. In every instance it was demonstrated that the group never abrogated its authority. The mechanisms each group devised for maintaining and safeguarding its sovereignty vary, of course, tremendously and are often of an exceedingly intricate nature. They have been referred to repeatedly in the previous

pages. We must, however, summarize them again before embarking on the attempt to describe more specifically primitive public law, private law, and criminal law.

The primary purpose of the political-legal structure, it cannot be too strongly stressed, is economic. It is to guarantee a man an irreducible minimum—food, shelter, and clothing. That includes protection against natural catastrophes. And, although there are tremendous variations in this regard, the law also guarantees him defense against the attacks of enemies.

To accomplish this, there are two sets of societal mechanisms, one, in a sense, formally invisible and the other formally visible.

The first consists of the courtesies, privileges, obligations and duties that depend upon blood-relationship. These bring both material and immaterial rewards. It is well to remember again that we are dealing here with inherited positions and not so much with the specific individuals temporarily holding them. One may object to the actual occupant, dislike or like him, disobey or obey him, as the case may be, but as an integral part of the government one obeys him unless, indeed, one is prepared to rebel against the government itself. This invisible government has, likewise, another aspect. It consists not only of inherited positions but, also, of the less automatically determined government of elders. This varies tremendously from tribe to tribe. But it is always present and always powerful for they, of course, merely represent another rearrangement of the brothers and sisters of your parents and your grandparents. The twofold attitude a man has toward all these individuals, namely, that they are, after all, only close relatives and officials, is at the bottom of most of the bickerings, quarrels, and jealousies to be found in every group. The reason these personal clashes have led to so few societal disruptions is

due to the fact that the clash was never with the position but with the occupant.

The formally visible mechanism consists of the enlarged family unit and whatever still larger social-political units a particular tribe happens to possess. Where there is a clan organization, and, we have seen, there generally is, this larger unit is so well-organized and integrated that it becomes as important as the invisible organization, if not more so, and authority gravitates definitely toward it. The clan organization is, in fact, the only truly functioning centralized societal unit primitive peoples possessed. What always remained separated in other units—the symbol and actual power—were here firmly united. What the clan signified is well illustrated by the Ba-Ila attitude. "The true clan" Smith and Dale report, "is that which appears when you are in trouble, when you are bereaved or ill and a clansman comes to you . . . Because they help you in all your troubles, they stand by you to death and everything else that comes to you—that is the great and true Mukoa." [8]

If, in all cases where the clan existed, its significance came out as clearly as it does here among the Ba-Ila little more would have to be said. This is, however, not so for, among many tribes, class stratifications and the prevalence of ancestor-worship complicate the picture considerably. This is particularly true of certain parts of Africa. The tendency among certain anthropologists, of late, has been, in fact, to minimize the importance of the clan in these tribes and to overemphasize the powers and functions of the family and the chief. Where ancestor-worship exists, this does, indeed, seem to be true. But ancestor-worship must not be taken too

[8] Cf. E. W. Smith, and A. M. Dale, *The Ila Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (1920), Vol. I. pp., 393 and 417. Also A. I. Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

literally as a religion. It obviously represents the most successful attempt of the elders to maintain their control in the face of the threatening growth of the clan. In other words, it is a reorganization of the second aspect of the invisible government described on pages 241 f. of this book (mss. p. 383).

A very old struggle seems to be involved here, that of the local unit against the tribal and national unit. To say that this reorganization has triumphed even in the unusual circumstances that obtained among the southeastern Bantu, as Miss Richards does,[9] seems to fly in the face of the very facts she adduces. As so many ethnologists before her have done, she has confused the function the paramount chief served with the actual power he possessed. It is a most natural thing for anyone brought up in our society to do. Thus, she quotes approvingly from a government report to the effect that "according to native customs, the land occupied by a tribe is regarded theoretically as the property of the paramount chief: in relation to the tribe, *he is a trustee, holding it for the people, who occupy and use it, in subordination to him, on communistic principles.*"[10] She does not appear to realize that this is language pardonable only from governmental officials. But yet she goes right on to do the same thing herself. On one page[11] she quite correctly states that the Bantu chief performs a practical function in the distribution and accumulation of food and is the organizer and banker of communal economic undertakings and, on another, we are told that

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[9] *Op. cit.*, pp. 140 ff.

[10] Quoted from Richards *op. cit.*, p. 147. The underlining is mine. This is a most amazing statement, a legal trustee permitting the owners to cultivate the land on communistic principles in subordination to him!

[11] *Op. cit.*, p. 153.

he has the prerogative of distributing land to his subjects.[12]

In short, even here among the Zulu where European ideas have played havoc for more than a hundred years with native African institutions, all the attempts to forcibly transfer authority from the group to an individual have only resulted in a greater elaboration of the fiction of authority. An older source[13] has summed this up well although not comprehending, any more than Miss Richards does, what he was saying—"The nation is his, the people, the cattle, the lands—everything; but then he must provide for all, protect all, govern all." The seat of authority thus remains exactly as we have described it above—the invisible government of inherited positions and the visible government of the clan. This is authenticated by Schapera[14] for the southern Bantu. There a chief could be removed from office if he failed to support his people.

If, now, we always keep in mind where authority resides and how it functions, we can turn to the consideration of the specific types of law. Let us begin with public law.

In a general sense all primitive law is public law.[15]

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[12] *Op. cit.*, pp. 150-151.

[13] L. Grout, quoted by Richards, *op. cit.*, p. 152. Miss Richards' amazement that "tributes" to which chiefs have no legal right under British law, are still being willingly paid is easily understood, considering her interpretation of the facts.

[14] I. Schapera, "Economic Changes in South African Native Life," *Africa* (1928), Vol. I, p. 174. Miss Richards' contention that the situation was different for the more northerly tribes is hardly valid.

[15] Willoughby's remarks on Bantu law are very much to the point here. He says, "Every phase of an individual's activity is controlled by a common sense of obligation to 'law and custom' . . . An individual is a kind of political . . . unit of the tribal organism, whose functions must all be subordinated to the normative idea of tribal life." *Op cit.*, p. 385.

Much, it is clear, will depend upon the extent to which a centralized fiction exists. But, at best, where real authority remains so diffused and non-centralized as it is among primitive societies and where coercion is so definitely limited in its applications, one can hardly expect public law to take on those distinctive legal characteristics it possesses with us. Even in Africa, where conquerors have, at times, enslaved the original owners of a land and compelled them to do certain types of work, it is more the language and fiction of coercion than the coercion itself which we find.

What can assuredly be called public law then, in this general sense, does exist and is to be set off from private law although always subservient and secondary to it. The most clearcut formulation it finds is, perhaps, in proverbs. In Africa and many parts of Asia all legal decisions are, theoretically, illustrations of such proverbs and in both Africa and Polynesia they are also used in order to formulate general principles of law and conduct. They help to define, everywhere, the extent to which personal relations can be pushed, no matter how close or how interconnected with traditional obligations and duties; what constitutes status and the loss of it; what are the limits within which solidarity holds; and, above all, what constitutes an offence against the group.

This latter point is, of course, of fundamental significance and is, naturally enough, bound up with the type of social-political structure which happens to exist in a particular tribe. Where the tribal consciousness has become completely dominant, as in so many parts of Africa any self-assertion of an individual against the community is, theoretically, sin. Where a theocracy prevails, as among the Zuni of New Mexico, any self-assertion of the individual against the priesthood is witchcraft and punishable by death. At the other ex-

treme stands a tribe like the Winnebago where the theory seems to hold that everyone has the right to do what he wishes as long as he does not infringe on the rights of another. It is public law that determines where he has done this and announces the punishments.

Public law is likewise all-important where the relations of one group-unit to another are concerned, whether it is a village, a clan, another branch of the tribe or an unrelated tribe. It is, in fact, in the delimitation of general rights and obligations arising in connection with these relations that the public law of primitive peoples attains its maximum differentiation from private law. Let us take an illustration from a comparatively simple Indian tribe, the Ottawa Indians of western Michigan.

If a man has been murdered by a fellow tribesman belonging to his own village, the measures to be taken are prescribed by the traditional procedure of the private law. If, however, he has been killed by a member of another village or of another branch of the tribe, the redress demanded may still be according to the prescriptions of private law but the procedure for securing this redress is entirely different. First of all, it is taken completely out of the hands of the family of the murdered man and, secondly, it entails a highly symbolical and solemn journey of specially chosen individuals who represent the village. Then, just as the individual ceases to exist *per se*, so the crime loses its particularity and becomes a generalized offence by one community against another. It remains such until the proper atonement has been made. But the actual redress is between individual and individual.

What is so interesting in this example is that there is no confusion here. The "state" is the "state" and the individual, the individual. The state is not acting as an

agent of the individual in order to secure him the reparation the private law demands. It is simply repelling an attack on its integrity and acting where the individual cannot act because at that particular moment he has ceased to exist. But, just as the individual as individual cannot act for the state, so the state in this tribe cannot undertake to do what properly belongs to the individual. Consequently, after the state has performed its function, the individual reappears and the further details are settled by the family of the murdered man and that of the murderer.

The example of the loss of individual rights on a war-party, given further on (p. 222), is another case in point. There it is the state that punishes. But it is not punishing an individual. It is taking cognizance of an offence against the community.

Enough has now been said to indicate in what sense the term public law can be used in primitive civilizations and the extent to which it is set off from private law. To the latter we shall now turn, taking criminal law first because it so clearly has a double reference, being a part both of public and of private law.

We cannot properly discuss the subject of what constitutes crime among primitive people apart from such notions as sin, in other words, apart from religion. Since, however, we cannot possibly, in this work, enter into an analysis of the intricate and often subtle interrelationship of religious notions with the practical problem of what is a crime, how is it expiated and what is its function, we shall ask the reader simply to accept the fact that this interpenetration exists. Much of this intermingling of the supernatural and the mundane, as I have pointed out before, is more a traditional phrasing than an actual fact.

Perhaps it is best to begin with some specific ex-

amples. Viewed from certain African data a crime is always a wrong done to society, which has been detected. A wrong committed in full knowledge that it was such but which has not been detected is simply a fact that has no social consequences.

Naturally, such a conception has both bewildered and often shocked the missionaries to whom we owe some of the best descriptions of native African life. "What they (the Bantu) blame" exclaims Willoughby, "is not lying, cheating, nor stealing, but a clumsiness of operation that leads to detection." [16] It is important to remember this, that, if a crime is a wrong against society then if society does not detect it, you have done no wrong.

Yet this is only one aspect of a crime and mainly of theoretical interest for, after all, society, in the vast majority of cases, does detect it. The other side of the picture, equally bewildering and immoral to the average white man, is the notion that crime meant no permanent stigma attaching to a person for all time. The Basuto of South Africa, one early observer reported, stole without scruple, were jealous, cheated, lied, and slandered. Yet, although they knew these were crimes and punishable, they committed them for they had in the back of their mind the fact that "When once convicted and punished for any offense, the memory of it ceased to trouble the offender. It was paid for, wiped out, and his character cleaned." [17]

By and large this Bantu conception holds for all primitive peoples. A crime is an act definitely willed and its essence, the deprivation by one person of the rights of another, material or immaterial, the group recognizes

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[16] *Op cit.*, p. 393.

[17] D. V. Ellenberger, quoted by Willoughby, *op. cit.*, p. 392. Ellenberger's accusation of theft, lying, slander, etc., must not, of course, be taken too literally.

as such. There is complete responsibility. The question of why a person did it is immaterial, although it might be and often is, extremely important in conviction. The primary fact is that a loss had been deliberately inflicted on a person.

But crime entails punishment. One follows the other just as inexorably as a gift is followed by a return gift. And just as a return gift always means a gift with some interest added to it, so punishment means replacement with some interest added to it, the interest in this case being the social consequences that follow until the proper and full atonement has been made. After this atonement is made the crime is literally paid for, wiped out and the man's character cleared. To have demanded social consequences beyond that would have been equivalent to insisting on some enormous and anti-social return gift.

That there is a "spiritual" side to a wrongdoer's state of mind is obvious but no feeling of sin, in the Hebrew-Christian meaning of that term, is present. All that is demanded is the realization that an individual has offended against the harmony of communal life. His punishment means that the harmony has been reestablished. This serves, as a matter of fact, as the best and most efficacious deterrent to wrongdoing. When, therefore, Willoughby[18] asked a native whether he was penitent at the time he committed a certain crime and the native answered, "No, it had not been found out then," there was no cynicism implied nor was this a sign of moral depravity. No disturbance in the harmony of the communal life had occurred.

This must not be taken to mean that there were not individuals who sought to escape the consequences of

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[18] *Op. cit.*, p. 393.

their wrongdoing. That, there were ever many, before their cultures were transformed by European influences, is, however, more than doubtful.

We come now to that crime which, among us, is regarded as the most heinous, namely, murder. It was a capital crime among aboriginal people, too. The killing of a fellow-clansman was, in fact, unthinkable. Yet, in some simpler tribes and everywhere where stratified societies existed and slaves were kept, killing was quite common. The annals of African, Melanesian, Malayan, and Polynesian history are full of killings that cannot be interpreted as always, or even generally, as being ceremonial and religious in nature. The answer seems to lie in an entirely different direction.

To kill an individual or force him to commit suicide, which is, after all, the same thing from our point of view, had none of the moral and religious implications which it possesses among us. To deprive a person while alive of the wherewithal upon which his existence depended, that, we have seen, was quite unthinkable; for life as mere vegetating under the continual threat of hunger and insecurity, such as is the lot of a considerable proportion of our world, such a life, no person in primitive societies would have long tolerated. He would either have rebelled or committed suicide. Life, admittedly, was intolerable under other conditions as well. Death, be it remembered, had no particular terrors.

Yet, even where life had its full meaning, it was not considered as inviolable a possession as it is with us, for the individual was of secondary importance to the group, this despite the fact that he represented an economic entity. His death meant an economic weakening of the community and, as such, demanded not simply revenge but replacement.

This has, of course, nothing to do with the reasons

that prompted individuals to kill their enemies or slaves with impunity or to consent to be burnt or strangled at funerals. It does, nevertheless, help to explain why there was no organized protest or rebellion against it.

The killing of a fellow tribesman was always a serious crime and punishment inexorably exacted. In theory, the punishment was death. This was the traditional demand and was reenforced by the grief the survivors felt. But to the tribe at large, particularly if it was a small one, this meant primarily a loss and a danger. Consequently, we find that, instead of prosecuting the murderer as our state does, the primitive community attempts always to save his life and to make this defense of the murderer dependent upon as complete as possible a replacement of what the murdered man represented to his family and the group. In some tribes, like the Eskimo and a few Indian tribes of Canada, this went so far that the kin of the murdered man could demand that the murderer take his place. In other words, the economic replacement and substitution were complete. So here, again, the function of the group is reconciliation or, better, the restoration of harmony. The emotional and traditional personal obligations were, theoretically, to be disregarded.

Naturally, in such matters, the intensity of the personal reactions often overwhelmed all other considerations, particularly since revenge was so frequently a religious duty and failure to take it might bring disaster upon the survivors. This was especially true where all deaths were ascribed to the evil machinations of other persons. Such a conception was widespread throughout the primitive world and was found on every level of society. If taken literally it would mean, particularly for Africa, Malaysia, and Oceania in general, that murder occurred daily.

The only possible explanation for such a conception is to regard murder as no more reprehensible than any other crime but far more serious and one which left the community in an awkward dilemma as to the punishment. If, indeed, murder was to be punished like every other type of wrongdoing then, obviously, there would have to be full replacement, plus interest. Replacement in this case would have to be not simply economic. The love felt for the deceased, too, would have to be replaced and the feelings of grief, of anger, of hatred, all of them definitely harmful to the equilibrium of the society, would have to be corrected.

The only completely logical procedure was, consequently, that of the Eskimo just referred to. For the murderer to be killed was sacrificing the equilibrium of the larger group, "the state," for that of the smaller group, the family or clan. Where the larger unit was weak—and this held true in very many cases, the attempts at reconciliation in the interests of the tribe or nation were often of little avail. Where class stratifications existed, the nature of the punishment depended largely upon the status of both the murdered man and the murderer.

It is easy to see the nature of the complications that thus enter and it is, therefore, difficult to arrive at any one correct and all-embracing theory which can be simply stated. If, however, what I am about to point out is remembered, aboriginal man's attitude toward taking life which seems so contrary to the other aspects of his culture will possibly be understood in their proper light.

Death by violent means was no different from natural death. In fact, a widespread conception existed that death was always an act of violence whether perpetrated by nature or by man. Both always had the same emotional and social-economic consequences.

The theory of an eye for an eye, the *lex talionis,* never really held for primitive people to any marked extent. Rather, it was replacement for loss with damages—a very well-known legal principle.

Death always meant a distinct economic loss not only to the small unit to which a person belonged but also to the larger.

Because it occasioned such great emotional reactions, it presented the most serious threat to the group solidarity which existed. And, just as the group intervened at death rites to see that the personal behavior of an individual did not become too definitely anti-social, so it did, or attempted to do, in cases of murder.

In no primitive civilization, however, was a satisfactory understanding of what was to be taken as full replacement arrived at and nowhere was the conflict between the two jurisdictions, that of the smaller family unit and that of the larger units, beginning with the clan, ever properly resolved. It seems not at all unlikely, then, that it was largely owing to the utter impossibility of always applying the "replacement" theory that murder of fellow-tribesmen tended gradually to take on the sense of sacrilege, as something absolutely contaminating and in the nature of a disease. Under these circumstances, it is easy to see why the attitude should develop that the murderer must be removed and the community cleansed. From there it was not a far cry to the attitude that, for this offense against the individual and the group, no acceptance of punishment by the culprit would constitute a complete payment, a wiping out and cleaning of character. This was particularly true, as one might have expected, in tribes with a clan organization.

The theory underlying this whole conception of the taking of life seems, broadly speaking, to have had two aspects. According to the first, no one had an inalienable

right to life as such. There were numerous occasions where man should be prepared, was, indeed, compelled, to give it up. He was, however, entitled to what life implied while alive. According to the second, the taking of life improperly was a sin, an attack upon the whole traditional and integrated structure of the tribe and had to be punished as such. The dilemma thus presented as to what type of punishment should be and could be inflicted, we have already discussed above.

The question involved in the killing of slaves and prisoners will not be discussed here because they belong really in the domain of civil law. Slaves and prisoners constitute possessions and property of a peculiar kind. Nothing that happens to them is properly a crime against the state.

In comparison with those which arise in civil law, the problems connected with the analysis of criminal law are small, not only because generalizations are particularly difficult and dangerous here but because, in civil law, an element enters which is relatively rare in criminal law, namely, the existence of fictions. Although it is true that the group is held responsible for the murder committed by one of its members, there is no fiction to the effect that the group has committed the murder. Murder is always something perpetrated by an individual. Only in cases of human sacrifice do fictions and symbolism enter markedly. But sacrifice is, of course, something quite different from murder.

So important are these fictions in civil law that, not only are anthropologists often in doubt as to where the fiction begins and ends, but so, apparently, were primitive "legal authorities" at times. When is a person a discrete entity; if he is one who is he; when is one in actual possession of an object and to what extent does that give

one the right to use it and if it is to be used, how is it to be used and who is to receive the emoluments and benefits that flow from it—all these questions raise myriads of problems. This is not simply because they demand detailed knowledge to answer properly but because, at every point, legal fictions and symbolical distinctions obtrude themselves. We should not forget that a symbol is not a particular way of stating a mundane fact. It belongs to another realm of reality as valid as matter-of-fact reality. Theoretically—and actually, in many areas of social life, this is true—they should not contaminate one another. In business transactions they inevitably do. Hence arise our difficulties as well as those of aboriginal man.

Since we are limited in space, we shall confine our discussion to three aspects of civil law—the rights of individuals, the nature of status and the nature and implications of contract. Only the first of these aspects, however, will be taken up here. The other two will be treated in the next chapter.

In the view of primitive man, an individual has no more an inviolable right to his individuality than he has to life itself. Biological facts entitle you to nothing. But although these biological facts entitle you to nothing, once having occurred, you automatically receive what is connected with them. This you have a right to demand. An individual, let me repeat, has the right, having been born and possessing official status, to the irreducible economic minimum, to self-expression and to freedom of movement.

The first we need not discuss again. The second, self-expression, seems a strange right to claim where society towers so completely over its members. Many anthropologists and many social theorists have, in fact, denied it and with some show of reason for, in theory, primitive

man often denies it. Yet even a casual reading of anthropological data shows that self-expression is to be found everywhere. When the primitive theorist denies it, he means that such self-expression must not fall into the category of a crime. But since, as we have seen, a crime carried with it punishment and the complete clearing of one's character, crimes are repeatedly committed. It might, indeed, be claimed that a primitive moralist would not so much say to a man "don't commit this crime" (not murder, of course), but, rather, "commit it, if you must, and take the consequences." Such an attitude betokens a specific conception of human nature, of what traits all men and women possess and how they express it. Without first describing what is here meant, we shall never be able to understand what are the legal limits within which self-expression and self-assertion are permitted.

All anthropologists today are agreed that aboriginal man, in spite of the intensity of his affections for his relatives and his fellow clansmen, has no illusions as to human behavior. His realistic attitude has often been identified with cynicism, unjustly so. When Willoughby quotes the old Basuto prayer, "O Lord, we are such liars that even if the tail of a fish was sticking out of our mouth, we would swear we had not eaten it," [19] this is meant as a statement of fact, without other implications. Human beings will lie, steal, slander, be conceited, be humble, hate, love, brag, anything you want. That is their right and since they take the consequences of their actions, that is their privilege. If a man talks too much about his virtues he is reminded of his frailties. Some people show their evil characteristics in public, some do

[19] *Op. cit.*, p. 393.

not. It is safe to assume that every one possesses the normal assortment of good and evil intentions. They remain an individual's private concern unless they happen to lead to crimes which are to be punished. The group then temporarily takes cognizance of them.

So insistent is primitive man that a person remain what he is, so certain is he that he always will, anyway, that, even where ancestor-worship prevails, the ancestor-god does not lose those idiosyncracies of character which he possessed while alive. "Their (the Bantu) gods are the mighty spirits of their fathers," says Willoughby,[20] "and they know them well. As during their earthly career, so now, these divine persons are neither puritans nor martinets, do not bother about peccadilloes, and can occasionally be hoodwinked over little things." [21] Smith and Dale make the same remark.[22] Examples could be multiplied a hundredfold from all parts of the world. Human beings can disport themselves as they will. If they are ridiculous, they will be laughed at; if they commit crimes, they will be punished and then, if they wish, they may commit some more.

The cardinal point in this attitude of tolerance is that a man pays the penalties for the vagaries of his character and so it is his business entirely. His rights to self-assertion only stop when this self-assertion definitely inflicts injury upon another person. But injury is of many

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[20] *Op. cit.*, p. 386.
[21] *Op. cit.*, p. 386.
[22] E. W. Smith and A. M. Dale, *The Ila-Speaking Peoples of Northern Rhodesia* (London, 1920), Vol. II, pp. 167-168. "In putting off the flesh the ghosts have by no means divested themselves of human nature. The best of living men are subject to moods; ordinary people are jealous, touchy, fickle; you have to be on your guard not to offend them, for if put out, they are apt to be vindicative."

kinds. Where it is formally a crime the machinery of government takes charge of it. Where it is an insult it is taken care of personally.

Granted this theory of normal human nature, there is, thus, a large area within which man can disport himself to his heart's content without the law formally entering. This area is just as large as that within which he is by law forbidden to be an individual and where his actions are strictly circumscribed.

In addition to the above freedom from annoying interferences on the part of the law and the state, an individual was never deprived of his physical liberty. Nowhere and at no time is there even the vaguest indication of the existence of such a thing as a prison or that punishment took the form of confinement or torture for members of a tribe. It was not even true of prisoners, although they were often either forcibly confined in an enclosure or tied to posts when first captured and before their fate was decided. But this confinement and deprivation of physical liberty never lasted long and was never regarded as a punishment.

There are, undoubtedly, a number of reasons involved in this absence of what, to us, is the most common form of punishment. Certainly the two most important factors in primitive man's refusal to deprive an individual of personal freedom are, first, his theory that being alive, a man is entitled to what is inalienably associated with that condition. The right to move freely is certainly one of the most obvious. The second factor is his theory of punishment. This means replacement and not the erection of obstacles to prevent it.

With regard to the restrictions on the individual they need only be touched upon here, for they have been discussed repeatedly in connection with the economic and the social-political structure. Moreover, we will have

occasion to refer to the subject in the analysis of status and contracts. The one general point to remember is that it is not so much his freedom of individual action that is then interdicted or interfered with as that he then symbolically and legally ceases in a sense to exist and is identified with the group. We must never think, in primitive societies, of the individual being set off against the group. We have only one unit to reckon with, the group composed of individuals interconnected and interlocked in numerous ways. The individual, as individual, emerges only in connection with his loves and hates, his ambitions and his power-drive, when he rebels and when he loses his status. When he is following the approved laws and customs he is not functioning as an individual at all and it would, therefore, be meaningless to claim that his actions are being restricted.

chapter ten

SOCIAL AND PERSONAL STATUS

THE FUNDAMENTAL PROBLEM IN THE POLITICAL-LEGAL structure of primitive civilizations centers around the question of status.

If a European wishes to visualize what lack of status implies among primitive people all he has to do is to think of the manner in which the major civilizations of Europe, particularly England, from the beginning of her colonial expansion to the present day, have treated the natives with whom they came into contact. The fact that they were human beings had no significance. Now, the same holds true for primitive peoples.

A member of another tribe might be a human being but he existed without references that were valid. He

had no status. Being a human being gave him none. The fact that he had it in one tribe gave him none in another. We might, indeed, go one step further and say that, even in one's own tribe, being born by itself gave one no status even though one were a chief's or indeed, a king's son. Status was a condition that could not be directly inherited. No fiction of continuity existed such as holds for the kings of England. On the contrary, there was very definitely a fiction of discontinuity. A man begins as a biological entity, is given status and becomes a social entity, then dies and again becomes a biological entity, although some of his experiences as a social entity may adhere to him. Only the group has continuity. It accepts a man provisionally at birth and rejects him at death.

In the discussion that follows I have confined myself to what I consider the main aspects of this subject. My treatment has had necessarily to be very broad, indeed even impressionistic, at times. This is particularly true for Africa, an area for which we have today a number of exemplary monographs written by students of Malinowski and Radcliffe-Brown.

At death, a legally and symbolically recognized interruption occurs of vital significance for the whole legal theory of status as well as of property. It means, among other things, that authority, as was pointed out previously, has reverted to the group and that status has again to be conferred upon an individual by the group in virtue of the authority vested in it at all times.

All the peculiarities which the concept of inheritance possesses, among primitive peoples, flow from this insistence of the group upon exercising its sovereignty at the death of any individual.

As a result, we find that, although it is customary to say that a man possesses a certain status or prerogative,

it would really be much truer to say that the status possesses him and that he is really an incident in its history. Remembering the right primitive man grants every person to give expression to all his foibles and to boast to his heart's content, we can then assess at its true value a Kwakiutl song like the following:[1]

> The little ones who have no ancestors who were chiefs
> The little ones who have no names coming from their grandfathers,
> Coming from insignificant places in the world and who now try to go to high places . . .
> But he does not work and plan at all, the great real one, the great one whose voice is true;
> He continues as one from one generation to the other in this world, he continues as one who is made to be the highest in rank with his real father.

This is about all that is left for man under the circumstances—rhetoric and pretensions.

This would make of status, then, a kind of official position, such as certain relatives possess, and give it continuity. It would explain, at the same time, why each new incumbent must be officially inducted into status, and his right to "office" authenticated.

This interplay of the concrete and the fictional-symbolical seems baffling and metaphysical to us but it is not so to primitive man. As a matter of fact, stripped of some of its accessories, it would be fairly easy for us to grasp if we were not so obsessed by the antithesis of the individual as opposed to society.

After these general remarks, let us briefly sketch the

[1] F. Boas, *The Social Organization and the Secret Societies of the Kwakiutl Indians,* U. S. National Museum (Washington, 1895), pp. 311 ff.

stages in the gradual process of induction into full status and the degrees that exist within it.

Nowhere does one come into the world so completely naked as among primitive people. Without being properly introduced to the particular world in which you are to function, your lot is hard and the uncertainty as to who you are sociologically constitutes a disturbing element to the peace of the state. Where a clan organization exists or where there are class stratifications, your potential placement is definite enough but, since birth, like death, constitutes an interruption in personal continuity, until you have actually been legally and symbolically inducted into the clan or into the class to which you belong, you are a cipher.

Among some tribes, like the Polynesian, where the principle of primogeniture rules supreme, the order of birth does, indeed, immediately determine your grading within the class to which you belong. But this simply makes the status you will have more certain of becoming a fact and your formal induction into it more imperative.

The first stage in this induction is a name. This has not got the simple connotations it possesses among us. It may mean little more than that you are a sociological entity, that you, at least, exist or it may mean so much that it would take a volume to describe it. Where ancestor-worship exists it is clear what its implications are likely to be. You become someone else temporarily and then your induction may become a complicated matter indeed. Where, as in Polynesia, sociologically and as far as concerns status, you are but one link in a long line of individuals, induction entails what is equivalent to a detailed examination of title. On the other hand, in the Northwest Coast of Canada, although genealogical considerations play a fairly important role, the fundamental

problem is the asset value of the name you are to receive.

A name, again, may mar you for life by giving you an ambiguous status. Take the following example, for instance. A Winnebago father of the bear clan happened to be without the adequate wealth to pay for the ceremonies connected with the naming of his newborn son. His wife's people thereupon persuaded him to let them pay for the ceremonies and give the child one of the names belonging to the mother's clan. The father consented. Now although, among the Winnebago, names have none of the monetary implications that they possess in the Northwest Coast of North America, still the fact that a man belonged to one clan and had a name belonging to another gave him something of an ambiguous status within the community.

But a child even with the status given it by the possession of a name was still a liability. No love or affection could obscure that fact. It is probably this sense of its being a liability and the essentially embryonic status a mere name conferred upon an individual which explains, in part, the nonchalance with which a number of aboriginal people resorted to infanticide. We know that those who possessed no status whatsoever, like slaves or prisoners, could, theoretically, at least, be killed with impunity. Apparently children with only a modicum of status could be killed in times of stress or if they constituted too great a liability, without any sense of ill-will being directed against the parents. It certainly would not be regarded technically as a crime. After all, a crime implied wilful deprivation of another's rights. But of what rights was an infant being deprived? Of life? To that no one has an inalienable right. The future rights it would possess when it was granted full status? But that was a contingency and any imperative present group-

need had precedence over a future contingency. The same explanation holds for the abandonment of the aged.

Full status was conferred on an individual at puberty and we all know the elaborateness of these rites and their ubiquity. A person was then truly functioning sociologically. He was responsible for his actions; he had to face life independently and he could marry and raise children.

There is no need of our lingering over these ceremonies. They have been described hundreds of times accurately and in detail. Only one point need be stressed here, namely, that, in almost all cases, these puberty rites are regarded as a symbolical death and rebirth. Sociologically, death is here the equivalent of absence of status and rebirth, the equivalent of possession of status. From the magico-religious point of view it means, of course, much more.

After the status which the puberty rites or their equivalents bestowed upon an individual in societies without class stratification, he could advance no higher qualitatively. Quantitatively, however, in prestige, in power and in influence, his advance was limited only by the structure of his particular society. In the case of the one generally "inherited" position in the tribe, chieftainship, that was, of course, different.

The question of how to interpret the rights that accompany certain grades of blood-relationship, particularly in the classificatory system, might possibly be considered by some as related to status. Such rights cannot, of course, be pushed aside since they are in a peculiar sense governmental posts. It might be contended that the incumbents do not gain status through them but simply power and prestige. Such an explanation, however, is not altogether satisfactory. The difficulty confronting us here is that this whole "invisible" government of relatives,

this whole interlocking system of traditional obligations and duties, has, in many ways, an autonomy of its own and its own method of determining status and this is not always in consonance with that of the larger whole.

Marriage confers no new status upon an individual any more than does parenthood. It is simply a contract between two people both of whom have status. Insofar, however, as marriage brings in its train the opportunity to function as a doubly mature member of the group, it had far-reaching effects in developing that ideal of inward stability which all individuals in a primitive community strive to attain and which a rather high percentage actually do attain. The outward expression of this inward stability and integration, aboriginal man has expressed in his manners. This fact, those who have ever had any intimate association with him and whose religious and social prejudices have not entirely blunted their sensibilities can amply testify.

The ideal man in all aboriginal societies is the middle-aged man, one who can hold his tongue, not be too hasty in his actions and who does not talk unless he is ready to carry out the manifest implications of what he has said.

When it is that a man can be said to pass from this category into that of an old man, this it is extremely difficult to determine. Generally speaking it should mean when he is no longer able to make his living unaided. But that would seem to lay the entire stress on his becoming a social liability and this is manifestly incorrect in view of the fact that old people played a very great role among primitive peoples. It seems best to define the function of old age as one where a man's activities have been transferred from the realm of manual labor to that of prevailingly affective and intellectual pursuits. The term affective is used here to mean a concentration on

the emotional side of his relation to the other members of the tribe. It is then that he exerts his greatest personal influence on the young and the middle-aged and prepares to devote himself to one of his most vital roles, that of indoctrinator of tradition and of the proper way of life. By this he means, of course, the world in which he functioned and the way in which he achieved prestige and importance.

His intellectual role is that connected with the administration of the rituals and as advisor on practical political matters. He is rarely more than advisor. Certainly never an initiator. That function is reserved for the young men and the middle-aged.

The fairly complete devotion to affective and intellectual interests, in spite of the respect accorded an old man, constitutes a retirement and, as such, a loss of status. This is often shown by the impatience with which he is listened to and the semi-patronizing way in which his wishes and requests are acceded to. He must be tolerated and he must be humored. That he must be taken care of goes without saying. A Winnebago Indian commenting upon the death of his father who had been a famous man in his time and for whom he had had great affection, answered the writer who had expressed his regret at his passing: "No, I'm not sorry that he died. That was the best thing. He had become a nuisance to himself and to everybody else."

The elders realized quite clearly and keenly exactly how people felt about them. Yet, in many cases, they knew that they constituted a vested interest. They, accordingly, used their power and prestige to attain what individuals losing their grip on the realities of life and of the workaday world have always tried to do—get as much as possible, with as little effort as possible. Yet the struggle to retain their privileges, such as leisure and, at

least, the semblance of power, encountered something far more dangerous than open opposition. It encountered kindly but firm insistence that they had become a liability to themselves, their family and the group. They themselves should realize this, it was contended. But lest they, understandably enough, did not do so, they were often told in very clear language what their duty was.

Among the Winnebago a very fascinating tale is told for their benefit and in the most kindly spirit in order to make them understand how easy it is for an old man to lose that proper sense of proportion and understanding of the inexorable fitness of things, without which you inevitably destroy that which you value most highly. (Cf. pp. 341 ff. of this book.)

The moral of this tale is clear. An old man who has lived his life should be willing to quit it without unnecessary expostulation. He cannot really be depended upon to act properly.

It thus follows from what we have pointed out that the status of the old people is in abeyance. And wherever status is ambiguous, whether it has not yet been fully granted and authenticated as with children, or is in the process of being lost as with the aged, life no longer has the maximum safeguards and can be sacrificed without involving anyone in guilt. This does not mean, of course, that the aged were necessarily killed or that they committed suicide. All it implies is that their elimination could be and was demanded far more easily than the elimination of fully functioning individuals. That there was great variability in this regard among different tribes, depending upon the political-economic structure of their society, goes without saying. It is fairly obvious that in simple food-gathering and fishing-hunting economies the aged could become economic liabilities far

more easily than in agricultural societies, and pay the obvious penalty.

The ease or difficulty with which life was taken after status had been acquired was thus a function of the ease with which status could be lost or withdrawn. From the legal point of view it is interesting to notice that a man could not be deprived of his life when he had his complete status and that is why a person was first deprived of status. The implications of primitive man's law are that you cannot be punished as long as you are a full-fledged member of the community. Our own law implies just the opposite. You are removed from the community and lose status as a punishment.

Death cancels all status, certainly all mundane status. Status is absorbed by the group. Nor, as we have been at pains to point out, does it then automatically pass on to someone else. There is as definite a break between the status a successor obtains and that with which his predecessor was invested as there is between the man himself and his predecessor.

From the consideration of the stages concerned with the induction into status let us now turn to the type of grades of status that can exist in the same tribe.

Before the full development of the classificatory system, that is, in the vast majority of tribes on the food-gathering and fishing-hunting level,[2] it is hardly possible to speak of a true gradation of status. There is simply a gerontocracy, vaguely organized in the food-gathering tribes and more systematically so in the fishing-hunting ones. True, there exist the beginnings of the institutionalizing of the generation principle, that is, of the rela-

[2] With the exception of those with stratified class. But such tribes are exceedingly rare, unless they also have a clan organization. They are not common even then.

tionship of a man to the son's and grandson's generation, but no more. Fundamentally, the only difference at all recognized between individuals is based on the possession of prestige and power. The enlarged family is the only group that exhibits any degree of unity or integration. For that reason it seems somewhat pedantic to speak of a child before puberty having only an incomplete status in such communities. It would be better not to use the term at all and, if we must distinguish between the position of individuals before and after puberty, it is best to speak in terms of degrees of personal security.

A true gradation in status begins only where the classificatory system of relationships exists. This, we know, is always found in association with the clan or the closely related dual or phratry organizations. Ironically enough, the same political organization that thus introduced the first formal gradation in status also was the first to introduce the first formal egalitarian principle. In fact, there seems to be little doubt but that this institutionalizing of certain relationship-degrees is part of the same organizational urge that led to the creation of the clan unit itself.

This grading of status on the basis of blood-relationship is, of course, utterly different from grading in terms of social distance such as that, for instance, between a chief and his family and the other members of the tribe, or such as is to be found where class stratification exists. For that reason one is loth to stress it specifically as a true example of status gradation. Even the distance between a chief and the rest of the tribe was only inconsistently and grudgingly recognized as a true status gradation where the clan organization prevailed. True grades in status then are to be found only

where class stratifications exist, slaves and captives always excepted.

Now, when we speak of class stratifications, we think primarily of that one feature which has played the predominant role in our own societies, namely, the definite coercion of one class by another and the tremendous difference in living standards of the two. Both, of course, are intimately associated. Other characteristics, such as the taboo on marriage and on social intercourse, or the belief that the lower class is inferior mentally and physically, that the work they do and can do is lowering in prestige, all these are to us somewhat secondary. For us the primary feature is, as I have said, the complete subjection of one class by the other and the insistence that this must be associated with a lower plane of living.

To understand class stratifications among aboriginal peoples we must divest ourselves of some of these conceptions and add others. If by coercion we mean the right of one group to forcibly restrict the other to certain specified types of labor that is, on the whole, rare. If it means restriction in the freedom of movement or the cancellation of true status and if, above all, it means depriving people of the irreducible economic minimum, that is unheard of. All the secondary traits, however, are generally present.

So much for the negative and positive correlations of the two. What are new traits which occur among primitive peoples? Primarily there are two. First, belonging to a lower class does not mean that you are governed by the upper class even if you are constrained to do certain work for it. The lower class has its own laws and government in which the upper class is not permitted to interfere in the slightest degree. Secondly, the refusal to intermarry and to have any social intercourse at all has,

among many tribes, no economic basis but seems to be generally connected with magico-religious reasons and to imply contamination. In other words, class distinctions, in this second case, conform more to what we would call caste differences in the Hindu sense.

A few examples of each of these two aspects must suffice. Let us begin with the first. Practically all of our instances come from Africa. The two Americas have, to be sure, a number of tribes with class stratifications. In North America we find them in the Northwest Coast of Canada and its southern coastal extensions and a small area near the mouth of the Mississippi. But none of these represent true class distinctions. In the Northwest Coast, for instance, the "lower class," the so-called commoners, are really younger branches of the upper group who, for various reasons, have become economically dependent upon the latter and with whom they cannot intermarry. The case of the lower Mississippi tribes is somewhat different and deserves better illustration because of the manner in which the clan organization has played havoc with class distinctions.

One of the best described of these tribes is the Natchez. Among them there were two classes, the upper called the Suns and the lower, the Stinkards. The Suns were divided into three grades, Suns, Nobles, and Honored Men. Now, since the Natchez had a dual division and since, in a dual division, the rule of exogamy prevailed, the upper class had to marry into that of the despised Stinkards. Descent, incidentally, was reckoned in the female line. The most curious complications resulted. The children of such marriages were still called Suns, but the males enjoyed this privilege only during their lives, for their children belonged to the group of Nobles, and the male children of these Nobles were simply Honored Men. Now these Honored Men could, by

warlike exploits, raise themselves to the rank of Nobles, but the best status their children could attain was that of Honored Men. The children of these Honored Men became Stinkards. If we follow the fate of the descendants of the son of a female Sun very much the same gradual loss of status occurs. The son of a female Sun was a Sun, his son only a Noble, his grandson an Honored Man and his great-grandson, a Stinkard.

Such a political organization can hardly be taken to represent a society with true social stratifications. It simply represents the social symbiosis of two fairly distinct and independent groups living together, but on two separate social-political planes between whom there was only partial social interchange and where one was recognized as superior in status to the other. In the case of the Natchez the fundamental difference between the two groups was further emphasized by the fact that their languages were quite distinct.

The historical problem involved in the case of the Natchez does not concern us here specifically. Yet it seems rather obvious that the explanation for this curious situation is to be sought in two historical processes: the superimposition, in this case, by conquest of one culture upon the other and the tendency of a clan organization—here the dual organization—to develop into a caste. This seems to have been a type of evolution that has occurred in many parts of the world, Africa, Micronesia, Melanesia, and probably, Polynesia.

We come now to Africa. There, each area where class stratification appears should really be treated by itself. On the West Coast, for instance at least, today, no indication exists that different cultures have been superimposed on one another by conquest, that is, we are not dealing with two ethnically distinct groups. It is also preeminently the section of Africa where class stratifica-

tion has been accompanied by well-defined monarchies. In eastern and southeastern Africa, on the other hand, the evidences of just such a superimposition by conquest and of class stratifications being almost invariably correlated with ethnical differences are overwhelming. There, generally speaking, peoples with a pastoral economy have either conquered or partially displaced those with an agricultural, fishing-hunting or food-gathering economy and forced them into a position of social inferiority. There has been little interference, however, in the political structure by these events. What we have is simply an illustration of two cultures living side by side in unequal social symbiosis. The ordinary supposition would be that here, at least, we should find exemplified the coercion so typical in our own stratified societies and that, to the contempt which the conquering upper class felt for the conquered, would be added a deprivation of the status of the conquered, a far lower and utterly inadequate standard of living and a fairly complete restriction of freedom of movement. Yet we find nothing of the kind. This only goes to show that these characteristics in our own class stratifications are based on entirely different considerations. Indeed, we know that they are.

No detailed description of the type of class stratification found in West Africa is necessary here. Some of its characteristics have already been touched upon. It differs from our own fundamentally. One example will have to suffice. I shall select the Kpelle of West Africa, since it has been regarded by one of our best authorities on primitive economics, Thurnwald,[3] more particularly as an instance of a society with marked class stratifications, in our connotation of the term.

Among the Kpelle there are three classes: the full

[3] *Die Menschliche Gesellschaft* (Berlin, 1931), pp. 238 ff.

citizens, the bondmen, and the slaves. The first constitute the Kpelle proper. They elect the king and they alone are eligible to the important positions within the tribe, civil and religious. A full citizen is anyone whose father or whose mother was one. He has no status as a citizen, however, until he has passed through the initiatory ceremonies of puberty. He cannot be sold or deprived of any part of his status either by a fellow-citizen or the king. The head of his clan may, however, reduce him to the condition of a *pawn.*

The second class, the bondmen, are composed of a variegated assortment of people. There are, first, certain types of slaves. By slave here is understood, on the one hand, the child of a slave who has been bought and who has been born in his master's house, in contradistinction to one who has been captured and, on the other, those captives whose fellow-tribesmen have not been able to pay their ransom within a given time. It, likewise, consists of individuals who have been reduced to this status through debt or who were "given" to the king when they were young. Constituting a group with correlative standing are also the foreign refugees who, for some reason or other, have fled from their own country. Their children, however, are free. Theoretically, a bondman can never attain free status. In actual fact this happens frequently as a gift from his "master." He cannot, however, purchase his freedom.

The third class, the true slaves, consists of two distinct groups; captives who have not been ransomed and tribesmen who have committed some serious crime and lost their status. All individuals in this class may be sold or given away but, apart from this fact, their life is little different from that of the bondmen. In some ways it is better because they can purchase their freedom, whereas the bondman can only receive it as a free gift.

Although, theoretically, all the produce of their labor belongs to their master, they, like the bondmen, are given a piece of land to cultivate for themselves and they receive one-third of whatever payment is due an individual who has been engaged to help them in some undertaking.

Clearly this is not a subjection of one class by another but simply a somewhat flexible arrangement and subordination of people in terms either of deterioration or of loss of status. Everyone can lose part or all of his status and the overwhelming majority of those without status can attain it. The explanation for this lies in the fact that the Kpelle and practically all West African tribes have a functioning clan organization and there can be no stabilized and rigid class distinctions wherever the primary implications of membership in a clan still hold. This, of course, holds, quite apart from the rights of all human beings, with and without status, to the irreducible minimum.

The second of the types of class stratification possessing traits quite different from our own is that encountered in Micronesia and parts of Polynesia. Two distinct forms seems to have merged here or, at least, to exist side by side, one based essentially on a difference in status, such as exists in West Africa, and the other on a theory of magico-religious holiness. We shall consider only the second.

We are dealing here clearly with caste distinctions that have developed in association with a class stratification and, conceivably, even of a clan organization. Whatever was their history, however, today, or at least when these cultures were still functioning, three strata in the population existed: a sacred superior class, an intermediate noble class, and the commoners. The latter could, theoretically, not own land or accompany the nobles to war

nor could they participate in the building of houses or canoes. They were confined to manual labor, particularly the cultivation of the land.

The separation of the sacred superior class from the nobles was complete and was based on the theory that either class, if they met, would "blight" the other. This belief went so far that it was thought that if a commoner ate the remains of a superior noble's meal, he would immediately sicken and die. The following quotation from a letter written by a Fiji noble to Thomson, indicates how a member of the superior class felt when compelled to live with his inferiors and how dangerous it was for the latter:[4] "It is not possible," said the Fijian, "for a chief to live with his inferiors, to wear the same clothes, to use the same mat or the same pillow. In a few days, the neck or the belly of the low-born man will swell up and he will die: his chief will have blighted him." The stress here is laid on the dangerous physical consequences of intercourse between the two.

The same thing was happening to the Fijian nobles themselves because of their association with the white people, so this Fijian claimed. It is to the blighting effects of the white chiefs that the decrease in the Fijian population was to be ascribed. "They (the whites) blight us—they are blighting the natives, and we are withering away." [5]

He ascribes this withering away to the fact that the whites are great and the Fijians insignificant. He does not, however, here mean technological superiority or greater prowess in war; he is referring exclusively to their peculiar magico-religious properties. In short, according to the theory of the Fijian nobles, a blighting exudation radiated from the white persons.

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[4] B. Thomson, *The Fijians* (London, 1908), p. 253.
[5] *Op. cit.*, p. 253.

Not only human beings suffered from the exudation radiating from members of the upper caste. The Samoan paramount chief, for instance, was supposed to keep his eyes on the ground when he walked out into the open because, otherwise, the fruits hanging on the trees would rot.

There are clearly a number of distinct things involved in this sacrosanct position of the upper class. What the exceptional sanctity of the paramount chief or king implied we have already discussed. That the nobles should radiate these disastrous influences upon their inferiors, however, requires further explanation. One might have expected that the contamination would be just the other way. Here, in the United States, many a southern gentleman has insisted that he would become sick if he ate at the same table with a Negro, and the Nazi legislation against contact with non-Aryans was based upon the same theory, namely, that it is what you despise that infects you. What is it, then, that has reversed the situation in the case of the Fijian superior caste? [6] Let us see.

Among all aboriginal peoples there exist inanimate objects credited with the same effects which the Fijian nobles possess. We must assume then that the Fijian, as well as the Micronesian and Polynesian upper caste, has become identified with such objects. This is our first equation. Next, it will be recalled that the dominant or superior class gives two diametrically opposed explanations of what happens when it associates with the inferior group. In both cases the inferior group is restricted to certain occupations, work upon which the existence of the upper stratum depends, and it has either no status at all or a status, which, theoretically, has no relevance to the tribe or nation in which its members live. If we com-

[6] This holds, it should be remembered, for the Micronesian and Polynesian area in general.

bine all these facts, then only one explanation seems possible, namely, that a dominant class has taken over and manipulated certain magico-religious ideas to justify and validate their political power. At bottom, it does not really matter very much whether the upper group blight the lower or vice versa. That will depend upon the magico-religious beliefs that happen to be dominant in the particular area. One suspects, however, that where the theory of the superior class blighting the inferior has triumphed the masters are not so certain of their control as in the other case, that, in other words, there really is no coerced subjection of the type we associate with our own stratified societies of the past.

Indeed there was no such coercion or subjection. In spite of the sacrosanct position of the paramount chief and the nobility, the power of even the most daring and ambitious ruler was strictly determined by the laws and customs of the land. They ordained certain things and not others.

Take, for example, the case of the famous Fijian chief, Thakombau.[7] As long as he adhered to the traditional rules his power seemed absolute. The moment he departed from them there was danger of revolt. In 1851, in order to pay for two gunboats he had ordered from abroad, a levy of *béche-de-mer* was ordered. Now, as Thomson[8] points out, this new tax was far less in amount than that levied for house-building or for providing food. It was, however, an innovation, quite apart from the fact that the individuals who did the fishing, members of the inferior class, knew very well that the *bêche-de-mer* would find a ready sale with the Europeans. Many of the villages flatly refused to obey, in some cases actually permitting the sacks to rot in their houses, in other cases

[7] Thomson, *op. cit.*, pp. 34-55.
[8] *Ibid.*, pp. 43-45.

burning them before the eyes of the Thakombau's messengers. Thakombau could do little about it. He even tried to persuade his people to work by taking 1000 fishermen with him to another place and setting them an example by fishing with his own hands. But his men even then worked grudgingly.

We must, of course, be on our guard against taking this separation of the upper class from the lower too literally. Thus, among the Palau of Micronesia, where the dire radiations from the person of the supreme chief were as awful as in Samoa and Tahiti, there were, nevertheless, occasions when this was forgotten. For instance every one, and that included members of the inferior class, had a specified position in the supreme chief's hall. When a commoner wished to give the supreme chief some information, he first told it gently to an intermediate chief who, with head averted, passed it on to the supreme chief. As some indication of the nature of the actual relationship between the lower and the upper classes, it may be interesting to point out that, in leaving the chief's hall, those of low degree had to go first and those of high degree last, lest the former attempt to assassinate some of the latter.[9]

But how are we to explain the intense belief in the withering away of the Fijian upper caste—and this may be taken to be representative of Polynesia and Micronesia in general—when in contact with white people? The answer seems to be simple. It reflected both a social and a psychical fact. The contact with the Europeans deprived them of status not only in their own tribe but, so to speak, in the universe at large. That a class with sacrosanct status should lose its status and be reduced to

[9] A. Kraemer, *Palau*, in *Ergebnisse der Suedsee-Expedition* (Hamburg, 1926), Vol. III, pp. 294 ff. Cf. also Thurnwald, *Die Menschliche Gesellschaft, op. cit.*, pp. 169-179.

the position of commoners, that they who formally radiated death should now become people who themselves wither away, this the Fijian upper class knew only too well from their own history. Defeat always implied just this. However, in such cases, although positions were reversed, the structure of society remained the same. Each class had its status. However, the European conquest did not reverse the position of classes. It destroyed the whole social structure and *Weltanschauung* of the Fijians without really imposing its own upon them. The result was complete demoralization and disorientation. That, under these conditions, an upper class should feel itself blighted and withering away is not surprising.

Nothing proves so conclusively the fundamentally fictional nature of the dread magico-religious power which the Fijian noblemen supposedly radiated than this fact. Nothing indicates so clearly that it is merely another name for complete loss of status by conquest. If it takes on, seemingly, such a fierce and rigid aspect in most of Micronesia and Polynesia this is because there was a continuous struggle throughout this area between island and island and often between district and district, that the superior caste of one period became the inferior of another. The structure of the society, it is true, remained the same. But it goes without saying that, where such instability with regard to how long a particular group would remain in the favored position existed, a really effective subjection of one class by another or any true feudalism would be out of the question.

But even had conditions been more stable, the fact remains that, where, as among all primitive peoples the products of human labor belong to the man who has produced them, this would have effectively barred any true class system in our sense of the term from developing.

We can do no better than to end this discussion with

a quotation from the very much bewildered anthropologist and administrator, Sir Basil Thomson, himself a member of the upper caste in one of the few caste systems still existing, that of England.

> "Land as land had no value," he tells us. "Its value arose only from its potential produce. The thing treated with most consideration among primitive peoples is human labour, and the products of it. In Rome and therefore, of course, in modern Europe, if a man plants fruit trees on another's land, he has no claim to them. They belong to the soil in which they grow; but in Fiji, while you may be wrong in planting cocoanuts upon land which belongs to your neighbour, you do not on that account part with your rights over the product of your labour. The land remains his, but the trees are yours, from the surface of the soil to the topmost frond. You have, moreover, in virtue of your property in the trees, a right of way over his soil to get at your trees. To our minds this seems very unjust . . ." [10]

We have had frequent occasion to speak of the role played in all primitive societies by the gradual loss of legalized status. We have seen how definitely status, no matter how high or how sacred it may be, disappears the moment a man leaves the confines of his own tribe and how it may, in fact, be lost or suffer great deterioration within the tribe itself. It will, therefore, not be amiss if we sketch briefly the significant temporary loss of status which has become institutionalized and legalized, particularly in Africa, in connection with debt and certain criminal offenses. In most of such cases surrender of the right to dispose freely of one's person does not necessarily imply loss of status for any great length of

[10] *Op. cit.*, pp. 34-35.

time, particularly where the bondage has resulted from indebtedness. But the complete indebtedness plus interest must be paid before full status is restored. If this cannot be done, not only the debtor remains in bondage but his children as well.

Among the Ba-ila of northern Rhodesia, for instance, there are numerous crimes, minor and major, and quite a number of infringements of etiquette and of the code of proper behavior which can, theoretically, lead to loss of status and bondage. Bondage here, as in many other parts of Africa, has, in fact, simply become either the accepted means of compelling a person to fulfill his honorable obligations or a method of punishment. Take, for example, the case of a man who married a woman without either observing the customary rites or paying the bride-price to her relatives and who then deserted her. She, thereupon, claimed the right to make him her property, that is, her slave, until such time as he had made ample reparation for his offenses.

That bondage should also be the punishment for a whole series of offenses against a person, such as spitting on a man, breathing in his face, knocking out his teeth, this seems, indeed, strange. But we must be careful not to call them trivial because they happen to be so in our culture. After all, slapping a man's face was, in the United States of 1900, a fairly trivial offense with which an American court would certainly not concern itself and which, at best, would have led to a personal brawl. Slapping a man's face in the Germany of 1900, on the other hand, would have led to a duel and danger of disfigurement for life.

Nevertheless, the fact does remain that, theoretically, a large number of offenses led to a temporary complete loss of status in native Africa. Since this meant that these individuals were for the time being excluded from many

of the functions and prerogatives of the normal members of the community, it would be very interesting to know how many such crimes were committed. Even English gentlemen administrators with their rigid conceptions of what was and should be a crime, insist that it was rare. "It can be claimed," says Orde Browne, "that the system (i.e., the structure of African society) produced a community where crime (and) pauperism . . . were rare . . . where, under normal conditions, all were adequately fed, clothed and housed . . . and where life could be carried on in wholesome and natural circumstances." [11] Our authorities, as usual, when it comes to quantitive data, leave us completely in the lurch. Yet there manifestly could not have been many crimes, particularly if they were connected, as Thurnwald contends,[12] with superstitious beliefs. In fact, the same authorities assure us that there were few. In all probability we are dealing here with individuals of pronounced anti-social tendencies. If we knew more about them, it is even quite conceivable that some of these "crimes" would turn out to be in the nature of conscious protests against the existing conditions.

We come now to an aspect of primitive civilization about which more misapprehension exists and which has led to more condemnation by the casual observer than most others, the position and status of women. Since this has already been discussed at some length and will have to be referred to again in connection with contracts, all that is required here is to emphasize one distinction that must always be borne in mind, namely that between legalized, recognized status and division of labor. It may,

[11] G. St. J. Orde Browne, *The African Labourer*, (London, 1933), p. 12.
[12] *Economics in Primitive Communities*, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

for instance, seem strange to us and to well-meaning missionaries that the women should carry a heavy load on their heads and an infant on their backs in pouring rain and without any protection, while the husband follows without anything in his hands and an umbrella over his head. Yet the answer a woman gave to a missionary who inveighed vehemently against this lack of feeling on the part of the husband was quite to the point. "We do not want to be called lazy," she said. "Labour has been assigned to each sex and this custom must be observed. It has nothing to do with Jesus. We noticed the European women washing clothes and linen for themselves, husband and children and also sewing for them, without any help from the man." [13] Yet, so high is a woman's legal status, on the other hand, that as the example on page 283 indicates, she can reduce her husband to the position of a chattel.

Every anthropologist knows that definite limits are set to the extent to which a person, female or male, will be allowed to suffer from the traditionally recognized division of labor. Thurnwald quotes a very interesting example: "A missionary living in the country for decades asked some boys of 14 and 16, why they would not help their mother who exerted herself to carry a heavy load of cereals. The boys were astonished to be admonished like that and replied, 'Do you not know that this is women's work? You are so long time with us, you should know that.' The missionary said, 'Do you not see that your mother is exhausted?' 'Well,' said one of the boys, 'if she is exhausted, it is different,' and he took some loads." [14]

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[13] R. Thurnwald, *Black and White in East Africa* (London, 1935), p. 159. Among these people washing and sewing is exclusively the man's work.

[14] *Ibid.*, pp. 100-101.

How far this separation of the relative duties of women and men can go, the following experience of the author with a Kiowa Indian will show. He was attempting to obtain some linguistic information from him and asked successively for the words *man, pitched, tipi.* Then he asked the Kiowa to give him the sentence *the man pitched the tipi,* to be met by stony and absolute silence. Again and again the question was asked. In every instance the result was the same. Then, finally, in great anger and with obvious contempt, he burst out, "Who ever heard of a man pitching a tipi!" Yet the legal status of women was quite high among the Kiowa. Here was a question of division of labor and nothing else.

Incredulity and amazement analogous to that exhibited in the case of the treatment of women is found among Europeans on the subject of aboriginal man's conception of what constitutes a contract.

This is one of the many aspects of life that can be said to have been fundamentally altered by the invention of writing. For the last three to four thousand years no agreement not made in writing or, at least, in the presence of witnesses has, in general, been regarded as legal, valid or binding. That is why even ethnologists and administrators with marked sympathies and appreciation for primitives' civilizations have invariably fallen down completely when they discuss the subject of contracts. Take, for example, Orde Browne. He is willing to admit that the structure of primitive tribal society as an experiment in government was, in many ways, a decided success.[15] Yet even he seems to think that the reason a native avoids contracts, if he possibly can, is because he regards them as "an irksome restriction of his own right to suit himself entirely as to how, when and where he

[15] *Op. cit.,* p. 12.

works." [16] Major Orde Browne knows very well that this can hardly be the case, for the native Africans have numerous forms of contract, as we have seen, which they recognize scrupulously and for infringements of which individuals are severely punished. These contracts are, however, utterly different in form, made by agencies of an entirely different nature and based on fundamentally distinct conceptions from ours.

To begin with, a contract, among us, is a personal affair between two individuals for individual purposes. It must conform to the laws of the land. But the starting point is not what the laws lay down but what two individuals want and, as we all know, great ingenuity is exercised to circumvent these laws if they conflict with the desires of the parties to the contract. The situation is quite different among primitive peoples. There much of what can become the object of contractual relations among us belongs to the group in principle and, while an object may be personally held it is not personally owned. Where objects and possessions, material and immaterial, can be "sold" or transferred, so many traditionally prescribed restrictions, so many obligations attend the sale and transfer that it is often extremely difficult to determine what exactly is being transferred and who is transferring it; whether emphasis is to be placed on the particularity of the object so sold or on the parties to the transaction. The object rarely is an isolated entity and the parties rarely are segregated and set apart from other individuals. This does not mean that there can be no individual transfers with contractual obligations but it does imply that there are so many peripheral obligations which no individual can dispose of, that the primary purpose a contract is supposed to

[16] *Op. cit.*, p. 75.

serve with us, namely, complete individual possession and right of disposal as we please, is nonexistent.

All of what has been said above simply signifies that the terms *contract* and *law* and *custom* are one and the same thing. A man is entering into a contract every time he obeys the laws prevailing in his community. Gifts, loans, purchases, sales are thus all excluded from the domain of contract. Wages, be it remembered, do not, strictly speaking, exist and trade is barter. When a Northwest Coast or a Crow Indian sells his rights to an individual for a consideration he does not enter into a contract with him. The rules and laws governing such matters constitute the contract. The contract is thus utterly unindividualized.

If this is true, what transactions remain as subject to contractual relations in our conception of the term? Among the vast majority of tribes very few indeed, except, strangely enough, marriage. But, before we turn to this latter subject, it is worth glancing at that section of the aboriginal world where individualized contract appears superficially to prevail, namely Africa.

In Africa we have the strange phenomenon that, while you enter into contractual relations with another individual without either party to the contract acting in his individual capacity, that is, you are simply following the traditional laws and customs of your tribe, nevertheless, if you offend against the obligations so undertaken, you become "personalized." In other words it can be said that you become a "person" when you break your contract.

The explanation is, in part, simple enough. You have committed a crime against the social group and you are, for the time being, removed from it. In other words, a man in his anti-social aspect, is an individual unrelated to other individuals. Yet the fact that a wronged creditor

can resort to all sorts of methods of enforcing his contract, from seizing one's household possessions and, if that is not an adequate repayment, one's children or one's wife or even the defaulter's person, all this implies that there is present here, in addition to the primary concept that you have sinned against the state, the secondary one that you have, as a responsible individual, entered into a binding agreement which has specific penalties for nonfulfillment.

It may, consequently, be justifiably contended that, wherever a larger tribal or national superstructure has developed, refusal to abide by the laws of the land cannot adequately be taken care of by the group administrative machinery and tends to be treated as an offense against individuals. Still, it must be remembered that it is the automatic loss of status of the defaulter that has permitted this in the first instance. Such secondary individualization in connection with crime has had far-reaching consequences in aboriginal Africa, for it is unquestionably largely due to this fact that the amazing development of the importance of evidence and the "codification" of the laws of evidence have taken place.

Africa is, however, the outstanding exception to the almost universal rule that, among aboriginal peoples, contract in the Roman sense does not exist, marriage, as I have said, excepted. It seems somewhat doubtful, however, whether this situation is to be ascribed solely to the tremendous native tribal movements, with the consequent development of semipermanent monarchical institutions which have taken place. After all, from the very earliest times, both coasts of Africa have been repeatedly visited by "explorers" from the great Mediterranean civilizations. Even if we dismiss the Egyptian penetrations, direct or indirect—and there is increasing reason for not doing so—it is becoming more and more clear that the

major civilizations of the ancient world, from the Egyptians on, have influenced this area. Later, of course, came the Arab conquest of the Sudan.

That these influences, however, probably did not interfere with the basic traits of aboriginal African civilizations is perhaps best shown by the nature of the marriage contract found among them. It is obviously a personal relation. As is well known, however, the individuals involved have frequently, at least theoretically, no choice in the matter. Yet, as one might have suspected, in practice this is not true and the boy and girl are generally apprized of the contract about to be made and allowed an opinion. Even in parts of East Africa where a girl is supposed to have little to say, theoretically, her wishes are consulted. Among the Wagogo says Thurnwald, if she is not advised, "she considers her self-respect impaired and may even commit suicide." [17] It is important to emphasize this point because the marriage contract is the one clear-cut instance of a contract in our sense of the term. It is equally important to realize two things: first, not only are the parents, or whoever it is who makes the arrangements, for the moment, individuals as such, and not simply surrogates or substitutes for the family or the group, but secondly, the contracting parties themselves are regarded as social units whose relations to the group are for the moment in abeyance. In this sense, marriage is very emphatically a transition status. Orde Browne[18] has gone even further and insisted that, in Africa, at least, marriage like murder, is to be regarded as the removal of a social unit from the group. Hence the requirement of compensation.

There is considerable truth in this exceedingly acute remark. But Orde Browne should have gone one step

[17] *Black and White, op. cit.*, p. 147.
[18] *Op. cit.*, p. 7.

further and realized that we are here concerned with more than simple compensation for the family or the clan. Moreover another factor enters here. The woman —it may also be the man—having been removed from the group must be restored to it. In this removal the family of the woman is involved, whereas in the restoration it is that of the man. The coupling of marriage with murder is then possibly more apropos than Major Browne imagined, for it could with some show of reason be contended that both families are accessory to a crime against the group, although one is more guilty than the other. The contract, then, from the viewpoint of the two families, is more than a purchase for which compensation is demanded. For that, a contract would hardly be necessary. It is the symbol of restoration to status.

In this particular case, the particularity of the two people responsible for the situation of removal and the two mostly specifically involved, namely the bride and the groom, must never be lost sight of. The bride and the groom because, by marriage they are, in fact, creating the nucleus of a new secondary unit are doubly set off and separated from the group for an extended period of time. Marriage separates the woman from the group and so, of course, does the extended period from pregnancy till after a child is born. This is the period in a woman's life, and often in that of a man's, which is, *par excellence*, one of severance from the group. The following two examples, one for marriage and the other for childbirth, from widely separated areas of the world may be taken as indicative of how complete this isolation and the severance of the woman from the group may become.

Among the Waarusha of East Africa the man who wishes to become engaged to a girl sends some presents to her father and then, a few days later, sends his own

father with four tins of native beer to find out whether his offer has been accepted. If it has, there is an interval of more than a year before the girl is definitely isolated from the group. This isolation is termed confinement. Before this confinement, however, she has to undergo certain initiatory rites. Before she is actually to be confined the young man sends his prospective parents-in-law a message to that effect. If the girl's father is satisfied that the young man will make a suitable husband, the confinement is agreed to. Throughout this period the girl is supposed to have no knowledge of what is to take place.

When the time for the confinement, i.e., isolation, has arrived, the youth sends his representative to his bride with a string of black beads.

> "This signifies confinement. On arrival the representative says to the girl: 'You are not to go out henceforth, for you are confined.' The girl cries out and the representative then goes away. In the meantime the girl's father is drinking and pretends that he has no knowledge of the girl's confinement. After about a week the youth would send his mother or sister to the girl's house in order to shave her hair and wash her. She would also be adorned with the string of black beads mentioned above. After a few days the youth sends some more presents . . . Custom then allows the youth to cohabitate with the girl. They live together until the girl becomes pregnant and then after about six months the girl is removed from her confinement. She is then dressed in new clothes and her hair is shaved. The day of the wedding is then fixed. This must take place before the girl gives birth to her child." [19]

[19] Report of Mr. Webster quoted in Thurnwald, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-150.

Strictly analogous to this confinement of the Waarusha is the very widespread custom of the isolation of the girl upon the first appearance of the menses, for it is immediately after this that marriage generally takes place. The puberty fast of the boy, which is just as widespread, represents a similar severance from the group.

The isolation of the woman ends fairly definitely among the Waarusha before the birth of the child. There are, however, many tribes where this is not the case, particularly those where the couvade exists, as the following example will indicate.

Among the Wappo of Central California immediately upon the birth of a child, the father ceases all his outside activity and remains in the house, sometimes actually in bed. If, under modern circumstances, he must go out, he does so only as a surrogate, so to speak, for himself, for he leaves a stick that is given his name, in his bed. After a certain length of time has elapsed, and his wife and he are to be freed from their isolation and the newly born child to be introduced to the world and the social group, all three go to the door of the house, open it, look out upon the world for a moment and then go back into the house. A few days after this they again rise and actually leave the house but do not walk far. They then return to it again. Shortly after this they leave the house and walk to the Russian River, a comparatively short distance, and there they utter some prayers and wash themselves, thereby signifying to the world that their severance from the group is over.

Only when all these facts and their multiple ramifications and implications are remembered does it become clear why what approximates to a contract in our sense of the term has, among primitive peoples, developed in connection with marriage and with no other relation and, even there, only under very special conditions.

As with ourselves the two questions that loom large in a marriage contract are respectively these: what benefit will accrue to the individuals and their relatives from a marriage, and what advantage will accrue to the community? In the more simply organized societies, those with food-gathering and fishing-hunting economies, the second is notably the more important consideration, for obvious reasons. Neither men nor women have "monetary" value there and they are not, in any sense, lost to their families. Nevertheless, since two distinct social units are entering into ties with one another which imply the separation of an individual from his own group, the marriage takes on the character of a transference for which payment of some kind must be made over and above the customary interchange of goods and food at the particular celebrations that take place. This takes the form of service to parents-in-law, particularly on the part of the man.

The situation is quite different with agricultural communities or where there is a clan organization or class-stratification. The case of the Ewakiutl Indians of British Columbia, a non-agricultural tribe with both a clan organization and class stratification, although not typical, may be taken as an illustration of how definitely marriage is interpreted as a loss to the families of both bride and bridegroom.

It might be well to recall here what connotations a name has among the Kwakiutl. First of all, it carries legendary and historical significance for it refers to the adventure a man's remote ancestor had with the animal from whom his clan derived its appellation. Secondly, it indicates the wealth and position of a family for, in addition to the clan ancestor, other animal guardians may be acquired through purchase. Numerous ceremonies are connected with the acquisition of a name or names, for

it is through them, as symbols, that a man obtains rank and prestige in the community.

Both boys and girls accumulate considerable wealth in names by the time they are ready to marry. A boy between ten and twelve, for instance, has to borrow, through his relatives, of course, a considerable number of blankets and so-called *coppers*, to obtain his third name. This loan must be repaid after a year with a hundred percent interest. In the case of a girl, the important thing is what she transmits to her children, for descent here is reckoned in the female line. Many of the privileges of the clan descend only through marriage upon the son-in-law of the possessor. He, however, does not use them himself but acquires them for the use of his successor and he becomes entitled to them only by paying a certain amount of property for his wife.

We have here, consequently, not a purchase of a wife, such as we shall subsequently find to be the case in Africa, but a transference of property and privileges through her. The contract here is not a truly individualized one but simply the observance of the traditional interchange of possessions, material and immaterial, about which the particular individuals have really very little to say, in spite of all the well-known braggadocio and side which they put on. When a man pays for his wife it is understood that this sum must be repaid to him with interest. This repayment is made in two installments. The woman herself is the first one. The second is made later when the couple have children, and consists partly of a certain amount of property, partly of the crest of the clan and its privileges. The percent of interest paid depends upon the number of children born. For one child it is two hundred percent; for two or more three hundred percent. Legally, after this payment has been made the marriage has been annulled, that is, to the extent that

the wife's father is regarded as having redeemed his daughter. If the latter then continues to stay with her husband she does so of her own free will. To avoid this situation the husband frequently makes a new payment to his father-in-law so that he may have a hold on his wife.

A situation somewhat analogous formerly existed in Samoa. There was a special type of ceremonial for marriage involving the interchange of gifts between the contracting parties. In the case of a marriage of a high chief the amount of objects of all kinds that had to be gathered, interchanged and redistributed was tremendous. Keesing[20] is quite right when he states that "In this matter a chief was the servant of his village or family, and an eligible office-holder was usually in former days 'married' to many maidens of high lineage from other groups in order to bring mats and wealth, together with genealogical alliances to his supporters. Such wives did not necessarily live long with their husbands; the marriage indeed might only be ceremonial and did not prevent their making a subsequent union; but, if they had issue, this added to their prestige as opening still another channel for reciprocal exchange."

The Kwakiutl case is, of course, a peculiar one, but it does bring out one important element in the marriage-contract of peoples with a clan organization, namely, the extent to which the clan affiliations of the husband and wife keep them distinct entities. In a sense, clans simply loan their members to one another on certain terms that entail reciprocal obligations.

It will have been noticed that, in the Kwakiutl instance, the woman is really incidental from the point of view of the transaction which has taken place. She hap-

[20] Modern Samoa, *op. cit.*, p. 294.

pens to be the medium through which valuables and privileges are acquired. This has led, in certain parts of the world, to a tendency for men to acquire as many wives as possible. As long, however, as the acquisition of a wife meant simply one episode in an equal exchange of goods in accordance with a ritualized and traditional usage, it cannot be said that an individualized contract existed. It is only when a woman is actually valued as such and is the actual object for which a payment is made that we can speak of a true contract. This occurs primarily in Africa, that is, to the extent to which it exists at all, for, as has been pointed out, here, too, it is not a true payment of a bride-price or anything analogous to the purchase of a commodity. Other and larger considerations of a social-political nature are involved and are even dominant.

The essential features of an African marriage contract are, then, first, the uniting of two families in all their ramifications into legal-economic connection with one another, by giving and taking symbols as equivalents for the bride and, secondly, the binding together of husband and wife by a particular agreement, one which cannot be changed except by a new agreement.

Only a few additional remarks need be made on the African marriage contract and these will be confined entirely to the southern Bantu tribes because of the excellence of our data from this section and the existence there of the well-known *lobola* system. *Lobola* is a consideration paid at marriage to the parents of the bride and the husband as a mutual guarantee for the fulfillment of the contract between two parties. This *lobola* is always in the form of cattle. If the legal obligations undertaken at the time of marriage are broken the *lobola* must be returned, for instance, if the husband deserts the wife or she him or if she fails to bear a child. In all

cases where the woman is at fault the only alternative to divorce, with the consequent return of the *lobola*, is to replace the wife.

Where payments of the value and importance of the *lobola* take place it is clear that the conditions which have to be fulfilled by the contracting parties would be rigorously laid down. It must be remembered, too, as Miss Richards who has so well summarized the data on the subject, points out that, "A large head of stock is . . . the summit of all ambition to the African, and marriage is the chief occasion on which cattle change hands. The payment of . . . (*lobola*) therefore sets up a particular relationship between the two groups united by marriage. The *lobola* cattle or even their offspring are rarely sold, and must usually be replaced if they die during the first year of marriage. They are kept in the herd distinct before the eyes of all, giving a very tangible reality to the nature of the permanent legal contract between the two families." [21] The primary conditions on the part of the parents of the bride is that they present a man with a woman capable of bearing a child and that they surrender their own claims on their daughter's unborn children, that is, permit them to pass out of their clan. The condition on the part of the bridgroom's parents is that the husband treat his wife properly and with due consideration.

This surrender of claims on the unborn children by the woman's parents is regarded by many observers as the real purpose of the *lobola*. In short, it is not meant to constitute a payment for the bride but for the transfer of the custody of the prospective children to their father.[22] And when it is remembered that this transaction is a ceremonial event, that it must be made in

[21] *Op. cit.*, p. 126.
[22] Richards, quoting F. W. T. Posselt, *op. cit.*, p. 124.

public, that a large number of kinsmen contribute toward it and that many of the bride's near relatives share in it,[23] then it will be realized that even here, the parties to the contract are not simply the parents of the bride and bridegroom but much larger groups. We can then understand why the *lobola* is so large and why its return can be so easily demanded. It is a compensation payment to the clan of the woman for the removal of her children from their rightful group. Only where the clan structure of a group is breaking down and being replaced by one in which the individual can, at least within certain limits, function as such, is this possible. And it is this very fact that makes the *lobola* form of contract more like our own. It is the nearest approach to our conception of a contract to be encountered among aboriginal people.

With the *lobola* form of contract we can properly end our discussion of status and its multifarious implications. Manifestly that discussion concerned itself primarily with the larger problems involved. I do not believe, however, that any basic aspect of this vast and complex subject has been omitted although clearly some of them may not have been treated with the thoroughness and the detail they deserve. In a book of this scope and size that could not be prevented.

We have now passed in review the fundamental aspects of aboriginal man's thought and activities and sketched in broad outlines the nature of the religions and social structures he devised. One more task still re-

[23] "The cattle paid for the bride are divided amongst her male relations, and are considered by law to be held in trust for the benefit of herself and children, should she be left a widow. She can accordingly legally demand assistance from any of those who have partaken of her dowry, and her children can apply to them on the same ground for something to begin the world with." Richards, *op. cit.*, pp. 128-129, quoting J. Maclean.

mains for us, a most difficult one, that of determining the extent to which he was aware of the constructs he had developed, the degree to which he could make them the object of conscious thought, and the manner in which he articulated this consciousness in myth, philosophy and literature.

In so vast a subject I can here deal with only a few of the problems with which he occupied himself and I shall therefore confine myself to three: The evolution of man and society, the critique of man and society, and the limits of man's power.

part three

MAN AND HIS WORLD IN MYTH, LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY

chapter eleven

THE EVOLUTION OF THE WORLD AND OF MAN

As pointed out in an earlier chapter, while the layman in aboriginal civilizations showed little or no interest in developing evolutionary schemes, the priest-thinker did. The latter was continually devising theories of how the world and man had come into existence and how they acquired their present shape. These speculations were almost always embodied in cosmological myths either in prose or poetry and we shall accordingly begin our presentation with an examination of these myths. Yet before doing so it is imperative to preface this presentation with a brief consideration of the nature of aboriginal mythology in general.

Myths, among primitive peoples, be it remembered, have almost everywhere been subjected to secondary literary reinterpretations. But they are also psychological documents and deal with problems universal in import and of paramount significance for the history of human phantasy and thought.

This second aspect of the mythology has been a subject of interest to thinkers since the beginning of time. Since the psychoanalysts, more particularly Freud and Jung, have, in the last two generations, made the most signal contribution to its understanding, I shall begin with them.

The title of Freud's basic work concerning primitive peoples, *Totem and Taboo*, has as its subtitle *Certain Similarities between the Mentality of Primitives and Neurotics*. This subtitle indicates clearly the attitude which Freud and, subsequently all Freudians, took toward the behavior and thinking of preliterate peoples. Although an elaborate technical psychoanalytical explanation is advanced to account for these similarities, Freud and his followers never actually make it too clear why preliterate man has persisted on a lower level of mental life. Obviously, they do not believe in the existence of any correlation between race and thought. Yet it is equally obvious that most of them would hesitate to accept the explanation that the thought and behavior of aboriginal peoples are simply functions of the social and economic structure of the societies in which they live, of the productive relations, of their technological retardation and their inadequate mastery of the physical environment.

This indecision is not accidental. It flows from certain essentially metaphysical assumptions which inhere in the Freudian conception of culture and cultural expressions and which stem from Kant, Hegel and the

German romanticists of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Their attitude toward social conditioning is not measurably different from that of the French sociological school [1] founded by E. Durkheim and continued by such important thinkers as M. Mauss and H. Hubert.

The approach of Jung toward the problem of primitive mentality, as embodied in the *Psychology of the Unconscious*[2] and in subsequent works, is significantly different.[3] While Jung, no more than Freud, predicates a correlation between race or physical type and mentality, he does, as we know, postulate not only a racial,[4] but a collective unconscious. He would not grant, if I understand him aright, that to remove a Bantu Negro or a Sioux Indian from his traditional cultural environment and to subject him to our own, would eradicate from the unconscious of either certain Bantu or Sioux inherent emotional and mental characteristics. He rejects, consequently, any theory which would ascribe to the social-economic background more than a passing or ephemeral influence upon man's psyche. Basic to his whole position is his concept of archetype. "Archetypes," to quote from the recent summary of Jung's psychology which has been endorsed by him,[5] "are representations of instinctive—i.e., psychologically necessary—responses to certain situations, which, circumventing consciousness, lead by virtue

[1] Perhaps its best presentation and critical appraisal is to be found in C. Lévi-Strauss' introduction to M. Mauss, *Sociologie et Anthropologie*, (Paris, 1950).

[2] The first edition appeared in the original German (Zuerich, 1912).

[3] Jolan Jacobi, *The Psychology of Jung* (Yale University Press, 1943). For the purposes we have in mind here this oversystematized presentation of Jung's views as of 1943 is quite adequate.

[4] It is well to remember, however, that he does not think of race in terms simply of physical measurements.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

of their innate potentialities to behavior corresponding to the psychological necessity, even though it may not always appear appropriate when rationally viewed from without." These archetypes constitute the contents of the collective unconscious and are, according to Jung,[6] "the ancient . . . primordial types, that is to say, the images impressed upon the mind since of old."

It is at this point that Lévy-Bruhl's viewpoint impinges on that of Jung, for his *répresentations collectives* are essentially identical with the archetypes. Returning to Jung again, "They (the archetypes) denote the symbolic figures of the primitive view of the world . . . Primitive tribal lore treats of archetypes that are modified in a particular way. To be sure, these archetypes are no longer contents of the unconscious, but have already changed into conscious formulas that are taught according to tradition generally in the form of esoteric teaching. This last is a typical mode of expression for the transmission of collective contents originally derived from the unconscious." [7]

It stands to reason then that, for all these theorists, Freud, Jung, and their numerous followers, mythology should stand in the forefront of interest since, of all aspects of contemporary civilizations, *maerchen* and myths do seem to reflect most clearly and most faithfully, long lost and long superseded stages of man's evolution. For the founder of modern comparative mythology, Wilhelm Grimm, the *maerchen* he collected were simply attenuated survivals of the old pre-Christian folk-beliefs.

The determination of such survivals and the naturalistic interpretation of myths were to become the main

[6] *The Integration of the Personality* (New York, 1939), p. 53.
[7] *Ibid.*, p. 53.

preoccupation of Grimm's successors.[8] That true primitive man, the ancestor of contemporary primitive man, should be profoundly concerned with the characteristics and the movements of the celestial bodies he saw every day seemed to these scholars and theorists self-evident. More than "intellectual curiosity" was involved here. His very life for good and evil depended upon them. What more natural, they contended, than that, from the very beginnings of his existence on earth, he should have attempted to explain the rising and the setting of the sun, the precession of the seasons, the waxing and waning of the moon, eclipses, etc., in the only language his highly subjectivistic and ego-centered thought knew, that is, in terms of symbolism and word pictures. His portrayal of these phenomena was given in terms of the life of the human organism—birth, adolescence, maturity, decay and death. Thus was myth born.

School upon school of naturalistic myth interpretation were to follow one another in rapid succession, one insisting that myths and *maerchen* were simply symbolic portrayals of solar phenomena, another that they referred exclusively to the moon, a third that they related just as exclusively to the stars and so on. None of these scholars doubted for a moment that such identifications and symbolizations were primary or that they did not extend to very remote periods of man's existence.

The approach of the psychoanalysts was quite different. For Freud, both dreams and myths had their origins in man's unconscious phantasy life and his wishful thinking. Myths are for him the secular dreams of mankind and the dream itself, "a portion of the superseded infantile psychic experience." Abraham, extending this

[8] Cf. for a summary P. Ehrenreich, *Die allgemeine Mythologie und ihre ethnologischen Grundlagen* (Leipzig, 1910).

concept, defined a myth as a portion of the superseded infantile psychic experience of mankind, containing, in a disguised form, the childhood desires and wishes of mankind.[9]

Expanding and elaborating this viewpoint, a whole series of scholars has explored every aspect of mythology and has claimed to find in it proof positive of all the propositions and interpretations advanced in Freud's *Totem and Taboo*. As to the legitimacy of their conclusions—this applies to all Freudians—there will, presumably, always be great differences of opinion. Only those who accept their premises can possibly accept their inferences. Yet, it must be said of this, as of all psychoanalytical approaches to the study of mythology, that, as I have said before, it stressed aspects of the subject which are of great psychological significance for the understanding of the history of human civilization. Anthropologists must seriously dissent, for instance, from the method, the utilization of the facts and the conclusions of such Freudians as Roheim in his interpretation of Australian myth and ritual.[10] They cannot, however, fail to listen to and be stimulated by what he has to say on Australian totemistic myths.

> "Totemism," he says there, "as a social institution is a defense against the separation anxiety. As a religion it represents the genitalization of the separation period and the restitution that follows destructive trends. As an aid to war in his struggle with internal and external difficulties it is a balancing apparatus consisting of a series of introjections and projections. Finally, in its mythical

[9] P. Federn and H. Merg, *Das psychoanalytische Volksbuch*, third edition (Vienna, 1939), p. 648.

[10] *The Eternal Ones of the Dream, A Psychoanalytical Interpretation of Australian Myth and Ritual* (New York, 1945).

> form, it represents the wanderings of human beings from the cradle to the grave in a web of daydreams. It represents our efforts to deal with the problem of growing up, aided by the illusion of an eternal fiction." [11]

With much that the Freudians have written about mythology, Jung would be in general agreement, although he approaches the subject from a characteristically distinct viewpoint. For him, myths, like primitive tribal lore, are expressions of archetypes that have admittedly been subjected to conscious and specific remodelling but which, despite this, have remained relatively unchanged through long periods of time. The myths of primitive peoples have, according to him, a very urgent significance for us since, as archetypes, they represent and mediate a "primal experience" in symbolized picture form. These archetypes are relatively limited in number[12] for they remain within the range of the possibilities embodied in the typical and fundamental experiences which human beings have had since the very beginning of time.

In all human cultures we find the same motives in the archetypal images, for they represent a phylogenetically determined part of the human constitution and they are repeated in all mythologies, fairy tales, religious traditions and mysteries. We all know them: the night sea-voyage, the wandering hero, the sea-monster, the stealer of fire, the slayer of dragons, the fall from paradise, the virgin birth, the treacherous betrayal of the hero, the dismemberment of the body of Osiris, etc. What else, so Jung contends, is the myth of the night sea-voyage, of the wandering hero, of the sea-monster than our timeless

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[11] *Ibid.*, pp. 249-250.

[12] I am here, as before, paraphrasing Jolan Jacobi's summary.

knowledge transformed into a picture of the sun's setting and rebirth? [13] It is the specific function of most myths and folktales, he insists, to do one thing, namely to portray psychic processes in symbolic, imaginative form. If the world of myths, so he continues, is replete with such forms as snake, fish, sphinx, world-tree, helpful animals, the Great Mother, the enchanted prince, the *puer eternus* and many others too numerous to mention, we know what they are—specific figures and contents of the collective unconscious.

Thus we see that Jung's interpretation of myths and their contents is quite the reverse of that given by the members of the naturalistic school of mythology which was so long dominant among mythologists proper and which still claims its adherents. Instead of certain myths, for instance, being explanations of natural phenomena, they represent psychic processes that secondarily employ the picture of the sun's rising and setting. Such a theory does not deny the importance of external events and their power to stimulate, animate and evoke the archetypes residing within our psyche but it does deny to external events any creative function.

As an example of how fruitful such an approach can be, let me briefly summarize certain aspects of four Winnebago hero cycles which I published in 1948, *Winnebago Hero Cycles*.[14]

These four cycles, within limits, lend themselves to a definite temporal sequence. The first, symbolized by Trickster, represents what might well be identified with the undifferentiated libido; the second, symbolized by Hare, the partially and imperfectly differentiated libido; the third, symbolized by Red Horn, the well differen-

[13] Jolan Jacobi, *op. cit.*, pp. 46-47.
[14] Indiana University Publications in Anthropology and Linguistics, Memoir I (Bloomington, 1940).

tiated libido and the fourth, symbolized by the Twins, the integrated libido. Let us call these four periods the primordial, the primitive, the Olympian and the Promethean.

In the first, the primordial period, we have an unformed cosmos inhabited by beings only vaguely characterized. There are no giants, no monsters, no human beings. It is a special universe over which Trickster, the uncreated buffoon hero, presides. His physical appearance, in so far as it is described, roughly foreshadows that of man although on a gargantuan scale. He is totally non-moral and non-purposive.

In the second, the primitive period, the scene is the world of today, inhabited by theriomophic and anthropomorphic beings as well as by man. There are monsters, but no giants. Over it presides Hare, born of a deity and a human mother. His mother dies in childbirth and he is reared by his grandmother, the earth. The actual physical appearance of the grandmother is fluid. Sometimes she is the actual earth, at other times, a woman. Although Hare emerges at the end of his adventures as the transformer of the world and the founder of culture, he is only secondarily moral and purposive. Toward human beings, represented as weak and helpless and the prey of all the evil forces in the world, Hare is ambivalent, a trait he shares with his grandmother Earth. But, while he is ambivalent because he is the eternal child who has no knowledge of good or evil, Earth is ambivalent because, being conceived of originally as antagonistic to man, she must be taught to be friendly.

In the third, the Olympian period, the scene is our present world as it has been transformed by Hare. It is inhabited by monsters, giants and human beings. The *dramatis personae* are certain well-differentiated anthropomorphic and theriomorphic deities belonging either to

the heavens or the earth, never to the netherworld. Intercourse between these deities and human beings is constant and unhindered. Their task is to come to man's help and preserve for him all the goods and values secured by Hare. In pursuance of this purpose, these essentially good deities wage interminable battles against the evil deities, monsters and giants who are incessantly attacking man. The deities themselves are almost completely moral and purposive.

In the fourth, the Promethean, the scene is again this world and the inhabitants are the same as in the third period. The heroes are diminutive twins, ostensibly human beings, and born in a violent and abnormal manner. They represent contrasting temperaments, one active, one passive, one, a rebel, the other, a conformer. The world has been conquered for man. Man has now presumably attained his full powers and achieved whatever degree of control over his environment and the forces of evil he is destined to possess. None of the numerous exploits on which they embark are for the purpose of redressing wrong or destroying evil. They are all undertaken out of a love of adventure and through exuberance of spirit. The Twins and their free wandering from place to place, their complete freedom from fear and their resentment of any curb put upon them, symbolize man's mastery of the world. In the end, this overwhelming confidence brings them to grief for they destroy one of the foundations of the earth.[15]

It is not only among the Winnebago that we encounter the grouping given above. An analogous one is found among other peoples in aboriginal America. Nor is it confined exclusively to the Americas. All the Polynesian groups have it, particularly the Maori of New

[15] P. Radin, *The Road of Life and Death* (New York, 1945), pp. 55 ff. Also, Chapter XII of this book.

Zealand and, as everyone knows, it is a salient trait of Japanese, Greek and Hindu mythologies.

How are we to explain both the general similarities as well as the specific contents of these cycles? The question of whether or not all have historically a common origin is really a subsidiary issue. But, even if all these myth cycles could be shown to have had a common origin, something extremely unlikely, there would still be the necessity for explaining why they spread and why they were acceptable and, of course, the necessity for explaining the one common prototype that remained. Only an examination of the contents of these cycles can give us an answer. I shall, therefore, confine a good part of the following discussion to two of the Winnebago cycles.

What, for instance, were the remote ancestors of the Winnebago trying to convey to us in the first, the Trickster narrative? What constitutes its appeal to the Winnebago of today?

Omitting the secondary accretions which are obvious, the theme of the Trickster cycle seems clear enough. We have a generalized and, if you will, a genitalized figure, completely controlled and dominated by his appetite and obsessively ego-centered. Throughout, he exhibits the mentality of an infant. In his comportment he is a grotesque mixture of infant and mature male. He has no purpose beyond that of gratifying his primary wants, hunger and sex; he is cruel, cynical and unfeeling. Yet as he passes from one exploit to another a change comes over him. The diffuseness of his behavior gradually disappears and, at what was undoubtedly the real end of the myth, he emerges with the physical outlines of man.[16]

[16] The detailed analysis of the Trickster cycle will be found in the next chapter.

The theme of the Hare cycle is equally clear. In very broad terms it can be said that the Hare cycle symbolizes the first correction of instinctual man as we saw him portrayed in the Trickster cycle. Hare must, first and foremost, become a socialized being. To be a socialized being one must have parents, must be born into a family and must know what love and affection mean. However, one cannot be socialized in an inimical environment. Accordingly, Hare's environment must be made friendly, a task that manifestly cannot be accomplished overnight or by persuasion. It can be achieved only through conflict and growth, a conflict and growth that must be both outward and inward. Nor can it be attained without the proper weapons.

The epic opens with the hero, born to a woman who has become pregnant without her knowledge and who dies in delivery. The hero is then reared by a grandmother, Earth. The latter is still closely united with all the inimical forces of nature and her attitude toward the newborn child is definitely ambivalent. The only help she vouchsafes him is to answer his questions. On the one hand, she shows solicitude for his welfare when he does not return from an adventure, on the other hand, she upbraids him soundly for his conquests over her relatives in the world of nature. Yet she never prevents him from embarking on his enterprises and always acquiesces immediately, the moment he asserts himself.

In the opening episode he is completely without knowledge and completely defenseless. He is unaware of danger when he encounters the strange creature walking on two insecure legs. So weak does this creature seem that Hare feels certain that he can blow him over with ease, so completely does he misjudge the power which this two-legged walker, man, possesses. He is quite unprepared when an arrow strikes him. He does not com-

prehend how the arrow has been discharged nor why. His completely subjective mentality is portrayed excellently in the second incident of the first episode. There we are told that "He put the arrow in the fork of a tree in line with the elk and said, 'Arrow, go!' Then he pushed it, but it would not go. He flattered it and tried to direct it but still it would not go." At this stage of development, Hare's grandmother must help him and she does so without reserve.

Hare is able to obtain the materials for the bow and arrows, but his grandmother puts them together. Two items he has still to secure, the arrow-feathers and the flint arrow points. In trying to obtain the first, he is carried aloft by an eagle seeking food for its young. Trapped and in imminent danger, he performs his first independent act. That first act is to kill. But more than that. Armed with the feathers of the bird he has killed he experiences a new sensation and a new mode of locomotion, flying. The feathers are secreted in the hollow of a tree. Then he returns home and orders his grandmother to get them for him. It is he now who takes the initiative and, just as before he could only secure the desired object after the fourth attempt, so now it is she who can only secure it after four trials. A new and significant note is added here. Grandmother Earth returns the first time unsuccessful, to say, "Grandson, I could not get them for you. I was afraid of them." That is, as soon as Hare's weapons are fully forged, his tutelage to his grandmother is over. We are quite prepared then for the two final sentences of this incident. "She (grandmother) asked for one but he refused. After that he made his own arrows."

The multiple symbolism involved here is patent. The change which takes place is not merely quantitative but also qualitative. And this is further emphasized and en-

hanced by the fact that Hare, the incarnation of the earthly, the pitiable small white object indistinguishable from the snow in which he seeks to lose himself, overcomes the skybird from whose body flows lightning, and incorporates his conquest in the weapon that is to give him victory over the evil forces of the world.

This is the first expression of a theme that is to recur repeatedly in the other two cycles of the Winnebago and is fundamental to an understanding of Winnebago religion and ritual. That theme is: the lowly shall be raised to high estate. Nor is this elevation the result of a power which comes from without. On the contrary, it comes from inward growth, a growth which, in turn, is determined by a non-personal and socialized goal. Hare, consequently, before he can properly set out on his encounters or even finish making his own arrow, must secure the one thing that enables man to establish bonds between himself and the world of the supernatural as well as between man and man, tobacco. Only then can he win the victory over the possessor of flint and bring the long process of completing the arrow to an end. As soon as this has been completed, his conscious dependence upon his grandmother comes to an end. From now on, the process of making her dependent upon him and of freeing himself from his unconscious dependence upon her is to begin.

The first part of that process is described in another incident the second episode where Earth helps to skin the bear and carry part of its carcass home. The bear, for the Winnebago, was the symbol of male sexuality and this incident is thus the initial part of the transformation of Earth into a woman. The second part is found in the eighth episode, where Hare causes his grandmother to have her menstrual flow. It is completed when he cohabits with her. Thus does Earth receive her individuation at

the very moment that Hare can be said to have completely freed himself from even unconscious dependence upon her and attained both individuation and maturity.

Before he attains complete freedom, he must be engulfed by the watermonster, by the being who laps people in. That this episode should almost immediately precede Hare's cohabitation with his grandmother cannot be a mere accident and is unquestionably deeply symbolic. One such symbolic interpretation is to be found among the Iowa Indians. It reads as follows:[17]

> One day on his travels he (Hare) came upon the *Uye* (female organ of the World). He went home and asked his grandmother what it was. She said, "That is one of your grandmothers, keep away from it."
>
> Hare disobeyed his grandmother and went there again and was sucked in. He was gone several days until his grandmother got so worried she went to *Uye* and asked for him. The *Uye* replied, "I don't know whether I have devoured your grandchild or not, I eat so many things." However, it spewed out some of its recent takings, and among them was Hare, nearly dead. His grandmother took him home, gave him a sweat bath and made him well, then she cautioned him again to keep away from the *Uye*.

The Winnebago Hare cycle deals properly only with the education of Hare and the attainment of individuation and freedom of action. This means, of course, his socialization. However, it might be well to add that the attainment of individuation and freedom of action is the consequence, not the cause of his socialization. At least, this would unquestionably be the viewpoint of the Win-

[17] A. Skinner, "Traditions of the Iowa Indians," in *Jour. Amer. Folklore Society*, Vol. 38 (1925), pp. 481-482.

nebago. Subsequent to this attainment of maturity, the cycle contains only one exploit which can be taken as symbolic of the dangers that still lie ahead for man when he faces reality, even if he is supposedly grown up.

This episode contains two of man's most persistent wish phantasies—how to obtain food without work and how to obtain any woman he desires. Hare's final demand upon reality is thus completely unattainable and unreal. It is a form of *hybris* which must end in tragedy and disaster.

This is the cardinal tenet of all Winnebago philosophy, sacred and profane. Such *hybris*, nevertheless, life is always forcing upon us. Only the wise, the humble in heart and the properly socialized can escape unscathed. Hare does not possess these qualities and, accordingly, he fails, fails in his apparent moment of triumph. He is defeated by a woman. But who is this woman? Every Winnebago will recognize her. She is a waterspirit, the symbol of the underground, the most beautiful and alluring of women but with whom contact leads either to death or to frustration. According to Winnebago mythology, the waterspirits and the thunderbirds are forever at strife. Between them stands man.

Evidently those who contrived the developmental scheme found in the Trickster and Hare cycles must have had more than elementary awareness both of internal psychic as well as of external physical growth. Obviously, every individual will possess this awareness to some extent. However, the characterization of Trickster and his activities indicates much more. It gives evidence that the Winnebago were definitely wrestling with the complex problem of individuation. Here in the Trickster cycle the individuation is mainly physical. In the Hare cycle it is psychical as well.

The psychoanalysts, thus, are probably quite correct

in stressing the light which these myths throw upon the history of individuation. The really basic question we have to answer, however, is of another kind. Is it really a fact, as Freud, Jung, and all psychoanalysts insist, that primitive man faces this problem on what might be termed another level from ourselves? Is it really a fact that the extreme subjectivism they predicate for him and which, they contend, his myths confirm, has permitted him to retain aspects of this process of individuation and a language for expressing it which no longer exist among the so-called civilized people and which belong to an archaic stratum of psychic evolution? If this is true then, of course, the Trickster cycle would take on unusual significance. This significance would be even greater if it could be shown that preliterate man can, on the whole, be equated with primitive man and that he never achieved any true individuation. This, as we know, is the assumption of all the psychoanalysts, and of innumerable theorists such as Lévy-Bruhl and Cassirer, to name only two of the more prominent. Then, of course, for aboriginal man, myth and reality would essentially be the same.

Such a view, however, is quite incorrect just as is the assumption that aboriginal man is essentially subjectivistic. The significance for philosophers, psychologists and psychoanalysts of these two cycles lies in the fact that they indicate not only that the Winnebago were aware of such problems as individuation and integration of personality, but that they even attempted to construct a sequence showing the evolution of both.

But it is, of course, not only the Winnebago who possessed this awareness or could express it in literary form. We find it wherever our records are reasonably complete. Take, for example, the Maori. There we encounter cosmological chants dealing successively with

the development of physical and psychical differentiation, and, finally, with the emergence of personal consciousness, the appearance of what is outside of the perceiving self, that is, the external world, the genealogical history of matter and finally with the appearance and differentiation of light. Take, for instance, the following:[18]

I

From the conception the increase,
From the increase the swelling,
From the swelling the thought,
From the thought the remembrance,
From the remembrance, the desire.

II

The word became fruitful;
It dwelt with the feeble glimmering;
It brought forth night:
The great night, the long night,
The lowest night, the loftiest night,
The thick night to be felt,
The night to be touched, the night unseen.
The night following on,
The night ending in death.

III

From the nothing the begetting,
From the nothing the increase,

[18] Quoted from P. Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (New York, 1927), pp. 293 ff.

From the nothing the abundance,
The power of increasing, the living breath;
It dwelt with the empty space,
It produced the atmosphere which is above us.

IV

The atmosphere which floats above the earth.
The great firmament above us, the spread-out space dwelt with the early dawn,
Then the moon sprang forth;
The atmosphere above dwelt with the glowing sky.
Forthwith was produced the sun:
They were thrown up above as the chief eyes of heaven;
Then the heavens became light,
The early dawn, the early day,
The midday. The blaze of day from the sky.

The actual creation of man, as such, is rarely depicted in any detail. I am not thinking, of course, here of the evolution of a mythical being such as the Trickster who is clearly the symbol for man. One of the few exceptions seem again to be the Maori. There, for instance, we encounter a myth-narrative where the gods are represented as arguing acutely as to how man is to be created. They begin with the assumption that he can come into existence only through the mating of a male and a female. But how is that to be accomplished in a universe only peopled by divine beings? From gods clearly only gods can be born. They, thereupon, come to the conclusion that the type of female required would

have to be created *de novo*. But let me quote the narrative in full:[19]

> Then Tane and his elder brother asked one another, "By what means shall we raise up descendants to ourselves in the world of light?" Their elder brother said, "Let us seek a female that may take on our likeness and raise up offspring for us in the world of light." Some suggested they should fetch some of the female Apas (divine messengers) of the twelve heavens. But the older brother replied, "If we fetch our females from there, then all our descendants will be gods like ourselves. Rather let us take of the earth, that it may be said they are the descendants of the earth." Hereupon it was agreed to search for such a female.
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> The family of gods now dispersed by two and two to search for the female. Every place was sought out but not one single thing was found suitable to take on the functions of a female similar to the female Apas of the conjoint heavens. All assembled again—none had found anything.
>
> It was then decided by the gods to ascertain or no whether the female was to be found in any of the living beings that had been appointed to dwell in the world (i.e., the animals, insects, etc.). For all females of living things conceive. An examination of the offspring was made. Some were found partly appropriate, some not. The reptiles have their particular issue in the form of eggs; they were not found suitable on examination and so were discarded. It was considered better that something which produced after its own kind or bodily shape should be adopted—and hence offspring by eggs was assigned to birds. It was now

[19] Stephenson Percy Smith, *The Lore of the Whare-Wananga*, Memoirs of the Polynesian Society, III (Wellington, N. Z., 1913), pp. 135-137.

obvious that the kind of female required from which the iho-tangata (the form or likeness and attributes of man) could be born, was not to be found.

So the gods all assembled again to declare their various ideas. And then spoke Ro-iho, Ro-ake, and Hae-puru to Tane. "O Tane, what is it ye are seeking?" Tane replied, "We are searching the way to the female." The three then said, "Try the earth at Kura-waka and commence your operations there for in that place is the female in a state of virginity and potentiality; she is sacred for she contains the likeness of man."

The gods then went off to seek the earth at Kura-waka. Here they formed a body in the likeness of a woman and completed the arrangements of the head, the arms, the bust, the legs, the back, and the front; and then the bones. Here ended the work of the elder brethren. Then followed the arrangements of the flesh, the muscles, the blood, and the fat. On the completion of these parts the breath of life was assigned to Tane to place in the nostrils, the mouth, and the ears. That was done. Then for the first time the breath of man came forth—the eyelids opened, the pupils saw, and the hot breath of the mouth burst forth, the nose sneezed. After this the body was taken to the altar at Muritakina where all the proceedings were voided (i.e., where all evil influence of earthly origin was removed and the first woman became a fitting recipient of the germ of life).

The parts were at first all made separately in different places but afterwards gathered and joined together and on completion, it was said to be a human body. It was Io and one of his messengers who implanted the thoughts and the living spirit.

But if most primitive peoples have not been interested in dwelling on the problem of how man came into the world, they have been universally interested in how he developed his specific human traits, how he conquered his world and how he learned to adjust himself to the external world and to his fellowmen. That they seem to have recognized the difficulties of this conquest and how painful, inadequate and dangerous this adjustment to the world of nature and of man had been, this we shall try to demonstrate in the next two chapters.

chapter twelve

THE CRITIQUE OF MAN AND SOCIETY

IF ONE THING CAN BE SAID TO HOLD TRUE FOR PRIMITIVE civilizations everywhere, it is the ruthless realism and objectivity with which man has been analyzed there. This can either be expressed directly, as in proverbs, in satires, in humorous tales and narratives or indirectly and symbolically. Only examples can properly illustrate the nature and extent of this realism and objectivity and the profound criticism implied therein and I shall therefore begin with a myth novelette from one of the Bantu tribes of Africa:[1]

> A man had taken a wife, and now she had the joy of being with child, but famine was acute in the land.
>
> One day, when hunger was particularly severe

[1] J. Torrend, *Specimens of Bantu Folk-lore from Northern Rhodesia* (London, 1921), pp. 14 ff.

the man, accompanied by his wife, was dragging himself along in the direction of her mother's home in the hope of getting a little food there. He happened to find on the road a tree with abundant wild fruit on the top. "Wife," he said, "get up there that we may eat fruit."

The woman refused, saying, "I, who am with child, to climb up a tree!"

He said, "In that case, do not climb at all."

The husband then climbed up himself and shook and shook the branches, the woman meanwhile picking up what fell down. He said, "Do not pick up my fruit. What! Just now you refused to go up!"

And she: "Dear me! I am only picking them up."

Thinking about his fruit, he hurried down from the top of the tree and said, "You have eaten some."

And she: "Why! Of course, I have not."

Then, assegai in hand, he stabbed his wife. And there she died on the spot.

He then gathered up his fruit with both hands. There he sat eating it, remaining where the woman was stretched out quite flat.

All of a sudden he started running. Run! Run! Run! Without stopping once, he ran until he reached the rise of a hill.

There he slept, out of sight of the place where he had left the woman.

Meanwhile the child that was in the womb rushed out of it, dragging its umbilical cord. First, it looked round for the direction which its father had taken, then it started this song:

"Father, wait for me,
Father, wait for me,
The little wombless.
Who is it that has eaten my mother?

The little wombless!
Wait till the little wombless comes."

That gave the man a shake . . . "There," he said, "there comes the thing which is speaking." He listened, he stared in that direction. "This is the child coming to follow me after all that, when I have already killed its mother. It had been left in the womb."

Then rage took his wits away, and he killed the little child! . . . There he was (the wombless one alive again) making a fresh start, and going on. Here, where the little bone had been left: "Little bone, gather yourself up! Little bone, gather yourself up."

Soon it was up again, and then came the song:

"Father, wait for me,
Father, wait for me,
The little wombless.
Who is it that has eaten my mother?
The little wombless!
Wait till the little wombless comes."

The father stopped. "Again the child that I have killed! It has risen and is coming. Now I shall wait for him."

So he hid and waited for the child, with an assegai in his hand. The child came and made itself visible at a distance as from here to there. As soon as it came, quick with the assegai! He stabbed it! Then he looked for a hole, shovelled the little body into it, and heaped branches up at the entrance.

Then with all speed he ran! With all speed! . . .

At last he reached the kraal, where the mother of his dead wife lived, the grandmother of the child.

When he came he sat down. Then his brothers and sisters-in-law come with smiling faces. "Well! Well! You have put in an appearance!"

"We have," he says, "put in an appearance."

And a hut was prepared for him and his wife, who was expected.

Then the mother-in-law was heard asking from afar, "Well! And my daughter, where has she been detained?"

Said he, "I have left her at home. I have come alone to beg for a little food. Hunger is roaring."

"Sit down inside there, Father."

Food was procured for him. So he began to eat. And, when he had finished, he even went to sleep.

Meanwhile, the child, on its part, had squeezed itself out of the hole wherein it had been put and, again, with its umbilical cord hanging on sang its song:

"Father, wait for me,
Father, wait for me,
The little wombless.
Who is it that has eaten my mother?
The little wombless!
Wait till the little wombless comes."

The people listened in the direction of the path . . . "That thing which comes speaking indistinctly, what is it? It seems to be a person. What is it? It looks, man, like a child killed by you on the road. And now, when we look at your way of sitting, you seem to be only half-seated."

"We do not see him distinctly. It cannot be the child, Mother; it remained at home."

The man had just got up to shake himself a little. And his little child, too, was coming with all speed! It was already near, with its mouth wide open singing:

"Father, wait for me,
Father, wait for me,
The little wombless.
Who is it that has eaten my mother?

The little wombless!
Wait till the little wombless comes."

Everyone was staring. They said, "There comes a little red thing. It still has the umbilical cord hanging on."

Inside of the hut there, where the man stood, there was complete silence!

Meanwhile the child was coming on feet and buttocks with its mouth wide open, but still at a distance from its grandmother's hut. "Straight over there!" noted everyone. The grandmother looked toward the road and noticed that the little thing was perspiring, and what speed! Then the song.

Great Lord! It scarcely reached its grandmother's hut when it jumped into it and up on the bed:

"Father, wait for me.
Father, hast thou come?
Yes, thou has eaten my mother.
How swollen those eyes!
Wait till the little wombless comes."

Then the grandmother put this question to the man: "Now what sort of song is this child singing? Have you not killed our daughter?"

She had scarcely added, "Surround him!" when he was already in their hands. His very brothers-in-law tied him. And then all the assegais were poised together in one direction, everyone saying, "Now today you are the man who killed our sister."

Then they just threw the body away there to the west. And the grandmother picked up her little grandchild.

This short novelette speaks for itself. It is, at one and the same time, a realistic description of what can hap-

pen to a man under acute economic stress and a social-psychological study. Here we have a husband and prospective father becoming suddenly oblivious of all normal human ties and of all social obligations under the stress of hunger, the great enemy. But, just as one cannot indict a famine, so one cannot indict a man stripped of all that has made him a social being when under the influence of the terror and disorientation hunger and famine evoke. But one can judge and punish him. Indeed, he judges and punishes himself. It must be so if society is to persist.

It is not a flattering picture of man that is here painted. But such is man. So even the best of us can become, such is the implication, unless we are eternally on our guard.

From this pessimistic-cynical appraisal of man and what he will do under conditions of stress, let us turn to the highly sophisticated but equally unflattering appraisal that emerges from the following Batak example:[2]

> There once lived a great prince beloved by all on account of his power and wealth. But he had no children. So one day he prayed to God, "O, Grandfather Mula Djadji, you have given my brother seven children, give me at least one!" Shortly after, his wife became pregnant and in due time a son was born to her. But when this child came into the world it was found to be but half of a human being; it had but one eye, one ear, one arm, one foot. For this reason it was called the "one-sided."
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> As the child grew up it naturally waxed more and more indignant at its hideous appearance and finally it decided to go to Mula Djadji himself

[2] J. Warneck, *Die Religion der Batak* (Goettingen, 1909), pp. 50 f, 8 ff.

and complain directly against the fate that had been allotted him. After many difficulties the boy arrived in the presence of God and to him he complained directly, "Grandfather, why did you make me so completely different in appearance from all other people? Give me at least a shape like theirs." Then God answered him, "You must not find fault with me in this matter. I would like to bestow upon all people a nice shape, for that would redound to my credit. But is it my fault if a man's *tondi* refuses to accept the lot I had predestined for him? To prove to you that I am telling you the truth, follow me to the sixth heaven and there you will be able to convince yourself that you have no cause for complaint against me." Thereupon God showed the boy the mould of his father's and mother's fate and explained to him how beautiful had been the lot that he had destined for him, too. "When you were born I showed you the fate that I had arranged for you, that would be yours on earth, but your *tondi* refuses it saying it was too heavy for you. I told your *tondi* thereupon to select something that would fit you but it insisted that everything I showed it was unsuitable and too heavy, and told me to split the mould in two. 'Good, I will do that for you,' and it was done. You can see for yourself what the original mould was like. You see how it is the mould of a complete man. When I split it, of course, only half a man developed, for only that which a man selects for himself comes to fruition."

God, however, had pity on the poor half-man and spoke to him. "Good, I will cancel your fate and again give you a chance to select your destiny." The cripple immediately set himself to the task of selection. He weighed all the moulds but everything was too heavy. Finally God asked

him which he had chosen and the man answered, "I have tried them all but they are too heavy. O let me not die! Give me my old mould back again for only that one can I carry!" "Well and good," said God, "but do not complain again. I allow all people to choose the good, but if they refuse, then they must suffer the consequences."

The *tondi* of man is an individualized piece of the soul-substance existing in the universe and of which everything partakes. The *tondi* is, so to speak, a man within a man and with its own will and desires which do not always correspond to those of the Ego, i.e., the *roha.* Yet it is the *tondi* that represents the true and fundamental part of every man's consciousness because it is regarded as having, of its own free will, selected its fate from among a large number of others before its incarnation in some particular person. The *tondi* alone is held responsible if it has not chosen a good fate.

In the examples given above the punishment meted out for transgressions, misjudgment and overreaching is definitely pointed out. In fact, a marked moral tone suffuses all of them. In most instances, however, the critique of man as well as of his actions is more subtle and is conveyed through humor and satire. This holds particularly for the longer prose narratives found almost everywhere, which center around a semibuffoon character frequently designated among the North American Indians as Trickster. As I have already pointed out, an unusually authentic example of such a Trickster narrative with all its implications was obtained by me from the Winnebago.[3]

It will be necessary to enumerate the various episodes in this amazing narrative in order to understand the satire on man and the critique of Winnebago society involved here.

[3] *Winnebago Hero Cycles, op. cit.,* pp. 56-92.

INTRODUCTION:

1. Trickster gives a warbundle feast preparatory to going on the warpath but leaves the ceremonial lodge before the rite is over and fails to return.

2. He finally starts on the warpath but destroys his boat and returns home.

3. He starts again and, successively, destroys both his arrowbundle and his warbundle.

These three incidents, of course, form a unit.

All this is clearly introductory. Trickster's companions have now abandoned him and he proceeds alone.

FIRST EPISODE:

4. He captures and kills an old buffalo.

5. His right and left hands quarrel as to who is to cut up the old buffalo.

SECOND EPISODE:

6. He meets an animal carrying its young in a pouch attached to its belt.

7. He kills the young animals that the stranger had entrusted to his care.

8. He is pursued by the irate parent but, at the last moment, escapes by jumping into the ocean surrounding the world.

9. He is misled by fish and fails to find the shore.

10. He finally finds the shore and captures a fish.

THIRD EPISODE:

11. He mistakes a tree stump for a small, dead person, pointing.

FOURTH EPISODE:

12. He hoodwinks ducks and kills them.

13. He instructs anus to guard the roasting ducks and goes to sleep. Fox, however, steals them.

14. He burns anus for not waking him.

FIFTH EPISODE:

15. His blanket disappears while he is sleeping but he recovers it.

SIXTH EPISODE:

16. He cohabits with the chief's daughter.

SEVENTH EPISODE:

17. He rides on buzzard's back who finally drops him into the hollow of a tree stump.

18. Women free him from the tree stump.

The pendant of 17 and 18 is to be found in 34.

EIGHTH EPISODE:

19. He gathers companions for the winter.

20. He transforms himself into a woman and marries the chief's son.

21. He has three children. The last one, as soon as he is born, asks for apparently unattainable objects.

NINTH EPISODE:

22. He returns to his original home and family.

TENTH EPISODE:

23. He encounters a talking bulb, eats it and defecates.

24. He falls into his own dung.

25. He extricates himself and looks for a lake to cleanse himself. The trees along the shore at first mislead him.

ELEVENTH EPISODE

26. He mistakes the reflection of a plum tree in the water for the tree itself, dives into the water, and is rendered unconscious.

TWELFTH EPISODE

27. He kills young racoons entrusted to his care.

28. He has skunk dig hole through a hill.

29. He kills the mothers of the racoons.

30. He is caught in the branch of a tree.

31. The roasted racoons he has prepared for himself are stolen by wolves.

THIRTEENTH EPISODE (cf. twelfth episode):

32. He is imprisoned in an elk's skull.

33. He persuades a woman that he is an elk spirit.

FOURTEENTH EPISODE (cf. seventh episode):

34. He transforms himself into a carcass and imprisons buzzard's head in his rectum.

FIFTEENTH EPISODE (cf. fourteenth episode):

35. He kills bear.

SIXTEENTH EPISODE (cf. fifteenth episode):

36. He and mink have a race. Trickster is caught under an ice-floe.

37. He tries to capture mink.

For pendant to 37 cf. 45.

SEVENTEENTH EPISODE:

38. His penis is eaten by a chipmunk.

39. He creates various objects useful for man from his dismembered penis.

EIGHTEENTH EPISODE:

40. He persuades coyote to scent for him.

NINETEENTH EPISODE (cf. eighteenth episode):

41. He visits muskrat, is fed by him and subsequently tries unsuccessfully to imitate him.

42. He visits swine, etc.

43. He visits woodpecker, etc.

44. He visits polecat, etc.

TWENTIETH EPISODE (cf. nineteenth episode):

45. He revenges himself on mink (cf. sixteenth episode).

TWENTY-FIRST EPISODE (cf. nineteenth episode):

46. He plays a joke on coyote.

TWENTY-SECOND EPISODE:

47. He recollects his original mission and removes from the Mississippi whatever he thinks might interfere with man's free traveling.

48. He removes an obstreperous waterfall.

49. He eats his last meal on earth.

In spite of the patchwork character of its structure and despite the fact that the sequence of episodes is

haphazard, it is clear that Trickster's character shows a development and that his activities become more and more purposeful as we approach the end of the narrative.

In the first twelve episodes frustration follows frustration without any benefit accruing to him, to any other individual or to society. He cannot even return kind for kind. Beginning with the thirteenth where he is imprisoned in an elk's skull there is, however, a visible change. He does not get into his predicament to gratify any appetite. He sees other people enjoying themselves and he wishes to do the same. As in the case of the buzzard, there is no justification for the behavior of the flies in this incident. Here, too, he has to use all his ingenuity in order to be extricated. But when he is freed he does not simply laugh at those who have freed him as in the buzzard incident. Instead, he rewards them in a positive and beneficent fashion. It is his first generous act. In the next episode he revenges himself upon buzzard. In the fifteenth, he kills a foolish bear and is frustrated once more, this time by mink. But his revenge on mink is clearly foreshadowed. There then follows the incident in which his penis is eaten away and the transformation of its pieces into objects beneficial to mankind. After this we have the bungling host episode (nineteenth). The visits to the four animals, although evidence of Trickster's laziness and trickery, are here motivated by the desire to feed his family. For his laziness and his unscrupulousness he is punished; for his thoughtfulness about his family he is rewarded. In the next two episodes he revenges himself upon two old enemies and, in the grand *finale*, he becomes a person with the conscious mission of helping mankind.

The plot of the Trickster cycle is quite clear. It is essentially psychological in import. A normal individual, the chief of the community, takes it upon himself to defy all customs, sacred and profane. As a result, he

finds himself deserted and alone and is thrown back, externally, upon the vaguest type of relationship with nature as symbolized by the birds who taunt and mock him. Internally, he is thrown back upon his primitive undisciplined appetites, hunger and sex. Instead of embarking upon the warpath, a highly socialized, cooperative enterprise, he finds himself proceeding aimlessly from place to place to satisfy his hunger and an undifferentiated sex drive, in the course of which he destroys and kills wantonly and sins against all human values. When he attempts once more to establish a connection with other human beings he has to do it indirectly, through animals (eighth episode), and on the basis of hunger, and of sex inversion. It is a rogue's progress; a picaresque novelette.

Since he is basically the male principal, a kind of Priapus, the cynical transformation of himself into a woman and his bearing of children, brings him to a sudden realization of what has happened. This has been skillfully indicated by having him run away from his last exploit after he has attained his objective, food and sexual gratification. In other words, he does not, as in his previous exploits, stop to laugh at the discomfiture of others and then proceed to walk aimlessly into another adventure. Instead, he flees from it and returns to his family and to socialization. Only twice afterwards does he kill wantonly (twelfth and fifteenth episodes) and in both instances those who are killed (the racoon mothers and the bear), bring destruction upon themselves through their own folly and weakness.

This first return to socialization is of short duration and inadequate. He cannot, after all, undo the harm he has done himself quite so quickly. Moreover, he still retains one of his physical characteristics, his gargantuan sexual organs. The incident that follows his departure from his home is the most Rabelaisian in the whole

cycle. He is overwhelmed and almost suffocated by falling into mountains of his own dung. Extricating himself, he proceeds onward and for one brief moment (twelfth episode), is almost his unregenerate older self. A new effort at socialization occurs (thirteenth episode), where, in his bewilderment, he identifies himself with a deity. However, he cannot attain complete socialization again until his sexual organs have been reduced to normal size. Once this has been accomplished (seventeenth episode), he can return to his family and human normalcy again. At the very end, barring incident 49, he rises to a still higher level by being transformed into a divine personage with a mission to help mankind.

In conclusion, one further question must be asked. To what extent did the Trickster cycle serve as a mechanism for expressing all the irritations, dissatisfactions, the maladjustments, in short, the negativisms and frustrations, of Winnebago society? Here an answer is possible. To a very marked extent it did serve as just such a mechanism. Winnebago, like most primitive civilizations, provided for a number of such outlets. Their societal organization put many restraints on its members. The main prestige value for men, war, and a none too great economic security, produced many crises, internal and external. The ideological superstructure, in addition, possessed a basic contradiction which had to be somehow resolved.

Trickster, of course, resolved nothing, except in so far as he demonstrated what happens when man's instinctual side is given free reign. He is the symbol for that instinctual side and, overtly, as we have just seen, he can serve either as an object lesson or made to be ridiculous, and become a source of laughter and amusement. If we follow instincts, so runs the ethical, philosophical meaning of the myth, we lose our sense of proportion and we kill others as well as ourselves.

But Trickster is not merely the symbol for the instinctual. He is likewise the symbol for the irrational and the non-socialized. For the Winnebago, for all primitive peoples, in fact, they all belonged together. They dreaded all three and tried to create as many safeguards against them as possible. Yet they recognized only too well that man could relapse into all three at a moment's notice. Every man, they felt, possessed a Trickster unconscious which it was imperative for both the individual concerned and, even more so, for society, to bring to consciousness lest it destroy him and those around him. No man can do this for himself. He must call his fellowmen and society to his aid. In the career of Trickster all this is depicted. There he sees his own instinctual and irrational self, unanchored, undirected, helpless, purposeless, knowing neither love, loyalty nor pity. Isolated, he cannot grow nor mature. He can do nothing with the two fundamental appetites, hunger and sex. Others, outsiders, must set proper limits to them. Characteristically, he depicts those who set these limits as his enemies.

The final demonstration of the consequences of the life instinctual is presented in the eighth episode. There sexuality, having been blocked in one direction, turns and reverses itself. And what is born of it? A child who, upon birth, asks for a piece of white cloud and a piece of the blue sky and who cries for green leaves and ears of corn in the deep winter.

The moral which is to be pointed out in the examples given above is perfectly clear. The life instinctual, so it states, leads inevitably to crime and the making of irrational demands. Both must end in tragedy. But how can man be warned against such an existence? In two ways, so it is here implied: by depicting the inexorable and tragic consequences that follow such a life and by holding it up to ridicule.

chapter thirteen

THE LIMITS OF MAN

IN THE PREVIOUS CHAPTER, WE DEALT WITH ABORIGINAL man's appraisal of himself and with his relation to his fellowmen and society. That appraisal was frequently none too flattering. But that, of course, is only one side of the picture. Happiness, love and affection, humility and modesty, kindness and forbearance, play a dominant role in their civilizations. To attain them is, in fact, the goal of every individual's life. Most people are content if they attain some measure of success in their search for happiness and the goods of life. But there are some, few in number, it is true, whose goal is set high. Such individuals are highly respected in primitive civilizations for their daring, but there is always the feeling that such men are in danger of not recognizing the limits of man's

power, of losing their sense of reality, and bringing destruction and death upon themselves and those they love.

There are innumerable narratives bearing upon this theme throughout the aboriginal world, but I shall confine myself again to narratives taken, primarily from one tribe only, namely, the Winnebago Indians, where I can be certain of all the subtle nuances and implications. Let me begin with a short philosophic tale from the Winnebago entitled *The Seer:*

> An old man once came upon what looked like a very holy lake. Its shores were steep and extended precipitously to the very top. Pine trees abounded everywhere. The old man stood watching the lake and then exclaimed, "This lake must indeed be very sacred and the various spirits who preside over it must be extremely powerful. Would that I were young again! Here, most assuredly, would I fast!" Thus he spoke. But then continuing he said, "But what am I saying? Have I not a son? I shall make him fast here!" So as soon as he arrived at his home he constructed a place for his son to stay and then besought him to fast.
>
> All winter long the son stayed there and fasted. Whenever his father came to see him he told him that as yet nothing had taken place. Three years the boy fasted there and yet he did not succeed in dreaming of anything. When, however, during the fourth year, his father came to him, the son addressed him as follows: "Father, at last I have received a blessing. The spirit asked for four offerings, tobacco, feathers, a dog, and a white deer; for these he asked. And then he asked for a fifth, a human life." When the boy finished the old man expressed his gratitude. Then he named the day on which this was to take place (i.e., the

offerings were to be made). "He who is in control of this sacred lake," continued the youth, "I shall behold, I was told. To him it is that you are to bring your offerings." The father felt very happy. He went home and it was a marked day.

Then the offerings were taken to the lake. There everything appeared to be in a turmoil and there was a tremendous noise. Every few minutes objects would emerge from the water. The old man standing there thought to himself, "Now, this is the time. Now it is going to appear." But then again he would think to himself, "No, perhaps not." Many things appeared, indeed, everything imaginable, and finally out of the lake there rose a burning log, smoking. When the disturbance had completely subsided the two saw stretched out on the shore a very white water-spirit, one of the kind that cannot be butchered with an ordinary knife. So the old man made himself a knife of red cedar wood and with this he proceeded to cut up the water-spirit. Out of its body he began to make utensils of all kinds. One piece of the body he cut off in order to prepare a certain kind of drink, another in order to make a war medicine. Out of the blood he made a magical paint which would enable him to kill an enemy even if the latter were resting within his own tent. The Winnebago would love this medicine.

There was nothing this medicine could not accomplish. Then he made an evil medicine which would prevent any person from making his heart ache or from making fun of him. The medicine was of a kind that if he wished to kill a man he would merely have to decide upon the day and then the man in question would perish. Indeed if he merely fixed his thoughts upon a par-

ticular man, that man would suffer. He could, with this medicine, make a man crazy, or he could deprive him of his soul. If a man were very far away and he but uttered his name, if he were but to murmur, "Let him die!" that man would die.

These were the medicines he made. No beneficial ones did he make; only evil ones.

Then they made their offerings to the water-spirit and when these were over the old man said to his son, "My dear son, let me myself be the offering." But the son said, "No, Father, when you have grown old and death has come to you, then you shall live with the water-spirit; you and he shall be companions." Thereupon the old man replied excitedly, "My dear son, even if this were to happen this very minute, indeed I should be satisfied." "Father, when you die, here at this sacred lake you shall live. Here forever shall you remain, as long as the earth lasts."

Then they went home to their people. The old man immediately began to use his bad medicines. Wherever a child was to be discovered who was especially beloved, wherever people were to be encountered who were unusually popular, the old man killed them. Soon the water-spirit appeared to the young boy and said, "What is this your father is doing? He is killing those who are most beloved, men and children. This is not good. Tell him to stop. Tell him if he refuses he will be transformed into a rock. Earthmaker did not create me for the purpose to which your father is now putting me and he would be displeased if this continued."

So the youth went to the father and begged him to stop, telling him that if he refused he would be transformed into a rock. But the old

man replied, "My dear son, I have now become so accustomed to what I am doing that I cannot stop."

The next morning the old man did not move and when his son looked at him he saw that he had become transformed into a rock.

So much for the story. Certain things are quite clear. The water-spirit has, in addition to the usual four offerings, demanded a fifth, a human life, that of the faster. To emphasize this demand we see death symbolized by the smoking log emerging from the lake to which the two men have gone to make their offerings. Now this request of the spirits for a human sacrifice must not, of course, be taken too literally. Looked at from the viewpoint of the spirits, every time a person dies from overfasting or during his fast, it is because the spirits desired his life. In human terms it simply signifies that an individual has attempted something which entails death. We know the son to be doomed.

From the very beginning, however, the father has kept the center of the stage and he does so again by insisting that he become the sacrifice the spirits desire. We see him before he has made this unusual request, ostentatiously preparing only bad medicines from the body of the water-spirit, although good ones were also at his disposal. When the son refuses to accept his offer the old man deliberately kills all of those most beloved in his village and actually forces the water-spirit to recognize him as the stipulated human offering. Why, it may be asked, does he insist upon taking his son's place? Why, if he is to die, does not his son die also?

To explain, let me call attention to the opening of the tale. That an old man should stand awe-stricken before the prospect of a particularly sacred lake is quite natural; that he should ponder over the exceptional gifts

possessed by the spirits presiding over such a place—that, too, is quite intelligible. Every Winnebago would both understand and sympathize with him. His regret that he cannot be young again is hardly a transgression against Winnebago ethics unless he draws unwarranted corollaries therefrom. But this is exactly what he does. In his enthusiasm he uses his son as a surrogate for himself, and here, of course, he sins most egregiously against a fundamental Winnebago tenet. To obtain something no longer within his reach, he selfishly sacrifices his son and compels him to attempt the propitiation of one of the most powerful and dangerous of all deities, one who frequently inflicts death. Even if the father had been represented as wanting his son to fast at this particularly sacred lake because of the great love he bore him and of a natural excess of ambition for the boy he would, according to Winnebago notions, have laid himself open to criticism. A loving and solicitous father is supposed to spur on his child to persistent effort in the attainment of gifts from the spirits but he is, at the same time, supposed to be extremely careful that the boy does not overstep the limits of discretion in his demands. No such excuse can be offered for the father in this instance. There is not the slightest trace of solicitude. It is he who plainly desires the powers the spirits can bestow.

The expected takes place and the life of the son is demanded. To judge from the insistence with which the narrator emphasizes the nature of the medicines the old man prepares, we must assume that, as soon as his son told him of the demand of the spirits, he realized the heinousness of his offense. It should be remembered that the old man is depicted as erring through too much piety, that he is not conscious of either his will-to-power or extreme selfishness. Once this is brought home to him, however, he makes up his mind to forestall fate as far as

that is possible. He realizes that someone has to die and he resolves that he and not his innocent son shall be the victim. How is he, however, to force the hand of the deities? His method is as ruthless as it is thorough. He must so behave, commit such crimes, that the spirits will slay him.

This, then, is the obvious interpretation of the tale. The doom that befalls the old man is that which overtakes all those who, whatever be their motives, be they good or bad, sin against that sense of the proportion of things which the realities of life impose upon us. The father had fasted as a young boy; he had presumably obtained his share of the gifts of the spirits. He had no right to demand more, no matter how overpowering the situation. Had it been possible to limit the consequences of his act to himself, little would have been said. But that is exactly what life makes impossible. Here the practical consequence of his religious enthusiasm, if one were inclined to place the most lenient construction upon it, is death for someone else.

In actual life the Winnebago made definite applications of this viewpoint. Any person, for instance, could go on the warpath, despite the express prohibitions of the chief of the tribe, and anyone who desired might accompany him. If the individual who thus led an unauthorized war party were killed, that was his own affair. It was merely interpreted as suicide, and that was regarded as unfair and wrong because it inflicted pain upon one's relatives. But, if any of the men who accompanied him were killed, the leader was guilty of murder. In other words, you must not implicate others in your unwarranted acts. That is the practical statement of the problem. Doom is simply its symbolical restatement.

In our tale it is a dreadful punishment that follows a humanly intelligible transgression. What seems to us an

excusable error brings about death, and, in order to avoid one death, two additional crimes—murder and suicide —must be committed. The chain of events is inevitable and inexorable.

One point has still to be considered. Why is the father transformed into a rock and why does the son tell him that when his time has come he will become the permanent companion of the water-spirit of the sacred lake? The wish of the father is thus, after all, granted, and he has, in a way, fasted and obtained his recompense. But he does not obtain it in the anticipated way. Not life, but death is to give him the happiness he craved. In the form of a rock, something that will last as long as the earth endures, he is to stand on the shores of the sacred lake and contemplate the majesty of the powers who control it. But why should he who has wrought so much destruction be granted even this boon? The answer seems to be because, after his manner, he aimed high. He erred from excess of enthusiasm. At least, deities and the priests of the deities may be presumed to take this tolerant view of the case. Die he must, for he has sinned and wrought ruin. For his high purpose, however, he is to be rewarded and his death mitigated by a measure of reincarnation.

In the above tale tragedy flows from an old man's overreaching and *hybris*. Even had he been less basically egotistical, tragedy, in the eyes, of the Winnebago, could not have been averted for he had sinned most egregiously against fundamental realities, against that sense of proportion which enables man and society to function successfully. Neither man nor the deities can permit this, particularly not man. High aim is no excuse if it brings about catastrophe. In primitive civilizations, deities are not easily flattered nor are they grateful to those who attempt to force their hands, to compel them in turn to

overreach themselves. This is beautifully illustrated by a Winnebago myth entitled *The Traveller.*[1]

In this myth a young man is pushed by a selfish father to overreach himself in the demands he makes from the spirits. He not only overreaches himself in his demands but, in turn, forces the spirits to overreach themselves in the gifts which they bestow, with the inevitable result that he and all his kin are destroyed.

Here, as in the case of *The Seer,* we have a selfish, power-driven father pushing his son to destruction. In fact, we have a divine father and an earthly father pushing and leading their sons to death. That the reasons for doing so in the two instances are different is, at bottom, indifferent.

However, the important point here is not this theme but the secondary psychological one, namely, the manner in which the water-spirit is compelled to overreach himself. Clearly he does not wish to do so and it is implied that he can win the victory over his opponent without doing so. However, he begins with a boast and an untruth, namely that he was not born of woman's womb. The point that the reformulator of this particular tale evidently wished to make was that, having once begun with an untruth, a sin against reality, he must continue, even though he protests and struggles, to commit more and greater sins. An act of *hybris* committed by a god does not, however, lead to a god's destruction. Nor would he commit such an act unless compelled to by man. In other words, when a god commits such an act, it is simply the symbolical reflection of man's overreaching and *hybris.*

This is what is implied when water-spirit and thunderbird are represented above the lake, struggling with each

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[1] Cf. P. Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher,* pp. 178-202.

other, inextricably intertwined and entangled, with the young man fasting on the shore watching them, terrified and fascinated. This, too, is what is implied when both are represented as appealing to the faster for help and promising him gifts true and false, gifts diametrically opposed to one another and all of which man yearns for. The lesson is clear. Man must make the decision. Man must learn the limits of his power.

In the above two instances man learns the limits of his power as the result of his own decisions. For the old man, in the first example, there is little excuse although, humanly speaking, his behavior is explicable and the dénouement of the narrative indicates that the deities recognize this fact. The young faster, in the second example however is quite innocent. How was he to know that a human being must not be inveigled into taking part in a quarrel with the gods, particularly when they are fighting for supremacy and when they represent forces of nature? Yet, guiltless or not, the young faster has interfered and he must, accordingly, suffer the consequences.

But there exist occasions where man goes about his legitimate and proper business, where he, in no fashion, injects himself into the affairs of the deities, where he, in no manner, commits acts of aggression against the world of nature, and yet is overwhelmed and destroyed. Let me take as an example the following tale from the Bushman of South Africa, entitled, *The Young Man who was carried off by a Lion.*[2]

> A young man of the early race once ascended a hill in order to hunt. As he looked around for game, however, he became sleepy—so sleepy, in fact, that he decided to lie down. What had hap-

[2] W. H. I. Bleek and L. C. Lloyd, *Specimens of Bushmen Folklore* (London, 1911), pp. 174 ff.

pened to him? he wondered, as he stretched himself out on the ground, near a waterhole. Never before had he been thus overcome by sleep.

As he slept, a lion, exhausted by the noonday heat, came to the pool to quench its thirst. The lion espied the man lying there asleep and seized him. Startled, the man awoke and, realizing that he had indeed been seized by a lion, he decided that it would be best not to stir, lest the lion bite and kill him. So he waited to see what the lion would do, for it was clear that the animal thought he was dead.

The lion carried him to a large thornless tree with yellow flowers called a zwart-storm tree. There it laid him in the tree, in the lower branches, however, and in such fashion that his legs protruded. Apparently the lion thought he would continue to be thirsty if he consumed the man's body immediately and that it would be better first to go down to the pool and drink some more water.

Before leaving, the lion pressed the man's head firmly between the branches of the zwart-storm tree.

No sooner had the lion left than the man moved his head ever so little. The lion noticed the movement, however, as he looked back, and was puzzled. How could the head move after it had been forced so firmly between the branches of the tree? Perhaps he had not fastened the man securely enough.

Just then the man fell over. So the lion returned and, once again, pushed the man's head into the middle of the branches of the zwart-storm tree. As he did so, tears came into the man's eyes and the lion licked them away.

The man lay there in pain, for a stick was pressing into the hollow at the back of his head.

He faced the lion steadily with closed eyes and turned his head just a little. To the lion it seemed again as if the man had moved, and again he licked away the tears from the man's eyes. Puzzled, the lion trod once more upon the man's head and pressed it down in order to be certain that the head might have moved because the body had not been properly confined, and not from any other reason.

The man, now fearing that the lion suspected that he was not dead, remained absolutely motionless, in spite of the fact that the stick was cruelly piercing his head.

The lion, finally satisfied that the body was now firmly and properly secured, moved a few steps away. Then he looked back. The man opened his eyes ever so little and through his eyelashes watched what the lion was doing.

The lion then ascended the hill and was about to proceed down to the water on the other side.

The man, on his part, turned his head gently, in order to see if the lion had really departed. But, as he did so, he saw the lion peering from behind the top of the hill. He had come back to take one more look at the man, for he had suspected that the man might possibly be only feigning death. That is why he had reascended the hill to take one more look. Since, however, the man still lay there immobile, the lion thought he might quickly run to the waterhole, drink his fill, and return without delay to consume the body. The lion was hungry enough but also not a little thirsty.

All this time the man lay there quietly watching to see what the lion was going to do next. He saw its head and shoulders finally turn and disappear; but, before he made the slightest movement, he wanted to be absolutely certain

that the lion had really gone and would not return to peer again over the hill. He knew that the lion is a thing of cunning and that the animal had been suspicious of the movement which his head had made.

The man lay there a long time without moving, and only when he was positive that the lion had truly gone did he arise and spring forward to a different place. But he did this circumspectly, running in a zigzag direction, so that the lion could not smell him out and know where he had gone. That is why he ran this way and that and did not run straight toward his own house. He knew that when the lion returned and missed him, he would immediately seek for him, following his spoor.

As soon as the man came to the top of the hill, he called out to his people that he had just been "lifted up"—while the sun had stood high, he had been "lifted up." More he would not say. They were, therefore, to gather together all the many hartebeest skins they possessed so that they might roll him in them, for he had just been "lifted up" while the sun had stood high. He wanted his people to do this, for he was certain that the lion, when it returned and missed him, would seek and track him out. It is the way of a lion, with anything it has killed, not to leave it until he has eaten it. So insistently the man besought his people to get the hartebeest skins and the mats and roll him up in them.

The people thereupon did this for the young man, for it was their hearts' young man who had made the request and they did not wish the lion to eat him. Accordingly, they hid him well, in such fashion as to prevent the lion from getting hold of him. Indeed, they loved this young man greatly and they announced that they would cover

him over with the huts' sheltering bushes: all this they would do, to prevent the lion, when he arrived, from seizing their hearts' young man.

Everyone now went out to look for some kuisse and when they found some, they dug it up, took it home, and baked it.

At just about this time, an old Bushman, who had gone out to get some wood for his wife so that she might make a fire with which to cook the kuisse, espied the lion as he came over the top of the hill at the exact place where the young man had appeared. Immediately he told his house folk about it. Speaking, he said, "Do you see what it is that stands there yonder on the top of the hill, at the place where the young man came over?"

Thereupon the young man's mother, looking, exclaimed, "Not on any account must you permit that lion to come into our huts! You must shoot it and kill it before it ever comes that far!"

So the people slung on their quivers and went to meet the lion. Again and again they shot at him, but he would not die.

Then another woman addressed the people, saying, "In what manner are you shooting at this lion that you cannot manage to kill him?"

But one of the older men replied, "Can you not see that this lion must be a sorcerer? It will not die despite our shooting at it, for it insists upon having the young man that it carried off.

The people now threw children for the lion to eat, but the lion merely looked at them and left them alone.

Again and again the people shot at the lion but all to no avail. The lion remained unharmed and kept looking for the young man. After a while, some of the people said, "Bring us some *assegais*,

so that we can spear it." So they began spearing it while others continued shooting. But, despite the shooting and the spearing, the lion remained unharmed and continued its search for the young man, for the young man whose tears it had licked. It wanted that man, none other.

Coming upon the huts, it tore them asunder and broke them to pieces, seeking for the young man. The people addressed one another in terror saying, "Do you not see that the lion will not eat the children we have thrown him? Can you not see that he must be a sorcerer?"

But some people answered, "Give the lion a girl. Perhaps it will eat her and then go away."

The lion, however, did not touch the girl. It wanted the young man it had carried off, none other.

Everyone was now completely bewildered, for no one knew in what manner to act toward the lion to persuade it to leave. It was late in the day and the people had been spearing and shooting at it since the morning; yet the lion remained unharmed and would not die. It kept walking about, searching for the young man.

"We no longer know what to do to induce it to leave," the people said. "We have offered children and a young girl but the lion has always refused them. It desires only the young man it carried off."

Finally, in desperation, some of the people said, "Tell the young man's mother what is happening. Tell her that, despite her great love for the young man, she must take him and deliver him to the lion, even though he be the child of her heart. She herself must realize that the sun is about to set and that the lion is still threatening us, that it will not depart. It insists upon having the young man."

> The mother heard and answered, "Be it so. Give my child to the lion. In no wise, however, must you allow the lion to eat him, in no wise must you allow the lion to continue walking about here. You must kill him and lay him upon my child. Let the lion die and lie upon my son."
>
> When the young man's mother had thus spoken, the people unwrapped the young man from the hartebeest skins in which he had been rolled and gave him to the lion. The lion immediately seized him and bit him to death, but as he was thus biting him to death, the people shot and stabbed the lion.
>
> Finally the lion spoke and said that he was ready to die, for now he had secured the man he had all the time been seeking; now he had got hold of him.
>
> And so the lion died, and both the man and the lion lay there dead, next to each other.

How are we to explain this tale? Why must the young man be killed after he has so successfully outwitted the lion? And why, in the end, must the lion likewise die? The answer suggests itself at once. Man must keep his proper place. He must learn to accept the fact that nature is more powerful than he is and cannot be outwitted. No *assegai*, no arrows, no sacrifices, human or animal, are of any avail until this cardinal fact is recognized. Only when the community realizes this can destruction be averted and can man be at peace with nature again. Only the mother of the young man comprehends this fully and because of her comprehension nature makes a gesture of reconciliation. The youth must die but his body is not to be violated or eaten, and the lion, who has been invulnerable to *assegai* and arrows, consents of his own volition to be killed.

The same lesson is taught but far more completely and

with all its psychological implications, in the Winnebago myth entitled *The Twins.*[3]

The foregoing myths deal with the tragedy which inevitably follows when man either overreaches himself or fails to understand his limitations, to understand the fundamental realities nature and the gods impose upon him. The old man in the first tale quoted is not content with having lived one full life. The young faster, in the second tale, steps out of his human sphere to interfere in the affairs of the gods. The young hunter, in the Bushman narrative, presumes to deprive nature of what she has seized and regards as her right. In the Winnebago Twin myth alluded to before, we find the heroes in the exuberance of their power not satisfied with merely conquering the world. They attempt to conquer the cosmos.

In all these instances the heroes are basically in the wrong, no matter what the extenuating excuses. But there are cases where man can go beyond what seem to be the limits of his powers and where he can defy the deities and yet suffer no evil consequences. That is the import of the following myth-tale collected by Rasmussen from those unbelievably tough-minded and realistic people, the Eskimo.

According to this myth-tale[4] there once was a sea-hunter whose wife was continually doing penance, for all her children died immediately upon birth. Finally when his wife again gave birth to a child that died as soon as it was born, he declared to her, "This time we will not do penance for, clearly, it is of no use."

Thereupon he went out at once in his *kayak* to look

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[3] Cf. P. Radin, *The Basic Myth of the American Indians,* Eranos Jahrbuch XVII (Zuerich, 1949).

[4] K. Rasmussen, *Thule Fahrt* (German translation from the Danish), (Frankfurt, 1920), pp. 240-241.

for food. Nothing extraordinary happened to him. The next day he told his wife to sew a small hole in his *kayak*. At first she resisted doing it but, since he insisted upon it, she finally gave in and began the sewing. After she had been sewing for some time, a large dog suddenly appeared before her. It was the dog of Moon-man. The woman cried out in her fright and her husband came running to her aid. He saw the dog and killed it at once. "Now," he said turning to his wife, "We have nothing more to fear, so finish your sewing."

It was evening before she was finished. Then husband and wife returned to their home. Arrived there, he suddenly turned to his wife and said, "Delouse me!" "But how can I do that now when I am doing penance," ejaculated his wife disturbed. But the husband answered, "We do not have to perform penance any longer, for the dog of Moon-man is dead." Since she was afraid of contradicting her husband, she began to delouse him. Then suddenly they heard outside a terrifying voice demanding, "Who has killed my dog?" At first there was no answer but, finally the man answered, "It is I who have done it!"

Shortly after this the man rose in order to wrestle with the Moon-man. They had been wrestling for a considerable time when, suddenly, the hunter lifted the Moon-man high in the sky and threw him on the ground with such force that he remained helpless on his back. The hunter then pulled the headgear of the Moon-man so tightly around the neck of the latter that he, believing that he was now going to die, shouted desperately:

"What? Is there to be no more ebb on earth!"

"What does it matter," replied the hunter.

"And is there to be no more tide?"

"What does it matter?"

"Well then, are seals never to give birth to young?"

This last threat was too much for the sea-hunter and he freed the Moon-man.

The story continues with the Moon-man inviting the man to visit him, telling him how to get there and warning him against deviating from the proper path and being enticed by Nalikateq, the spirit who cuts people's lungs out, to enter her house. The man, of course, does not obey and, in consequence, has his lungs cut out from him. He is only saved from death by the timely intervention of the Moon-man.

For our purposes the story ends when the Moon-man, after being conquered, saves himself by putting his last question to the man. Man here has successfully rebelled against religious-magical demands that were making life unbearable. By conquering the spirit, with whom the shaman had associated these taboos, he demonstrated that taboos must never be developed to such a point that it would mean death to observe them. The Moon-man, however, points out that if the sea-hunter really killed him he would not only destroy what possibly deserved to be destroyed but actually destroy the material basis of life, the principal food-supply.

In short, we have here an excellent illustration of what is always so dear and close to the heart of aboriginal man: beware of *hybris*, whether of the gods or of man.

Our last example brings to the fore the fundamental trait always to be remembered about the cultures of all primitive peoples, namely, the belief and realization that man must find his happiness here on earth. The gods have no sympathy with men that turn their backs on this world or who have no understanding or respect for the things of this earth. In our last example, the sea-hunter is willing to get along without ebb or tide but not without his basic food supply. *Sila*, nature, according to

the Eskimo, withdraws into its own endless nothingness and sends no message to mankind when all is well. *Sila* remains apart from mankind, an old Eskimo told Rasmussen, unspeakably far away, "as long as men do not abuse life but act with reverence towards their daily food."

But life on earth is not merely material. Man may have originally known no other type of existence, so runs an old Alaskan Eskimo tale. Then life meant work, digestion and sleep; one day was like another. Monotony rusted men's minds. That was before mankind knew what joy was, before they had songs and festivals.

Joy and laughter and humor. Without these life is incomplete. Nor are joy and festivity to be taken here as a simple expression of animal spirits. "The most festive thing of all," so the narrator of the Alaskan stories published under the title *The Eagle's Gift* [5] told Rasmussen, "is joy in beautiful, smooth words and our ability to express them." With this joy and laughter and humor went respect for life and for man's spirit. Despite his battles with himself and his fellowmen, despite defeat upon defeat administered to him by nature and the divine, throughout all primitive cultures there runs the underlying faith that man will ultimately emerge as victor over himself, over nature and over the deities. The one condition necessary is that he remain loyal to the world in which he lives.

No other primitive people have expressed this faith in man and this loyalty to the earth and what pertains to the earth more clearly and triumphantly than the Eskimo. And so I shall close this book with the words of the Eskimo, Anarulunguaq, when he stood on the roof of a skyscraper overlooking New York:

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[5] (New York, 1932.)

"Ah," so he sighed, "and we used to think Nature was the greatest and most wonderful of all! Yet here we are among the mountains and great gulfs and precipices, all made by the work of human hands. Nature is great; Sila, as we call it at home; nature, the world, the universe, all that is Sila; which our wise men declared they could hold in poise. And I could never believe it; but I see it now. Nature is great but man is greater still. Those tiny beings we can see down there far below, hurrying this way and that. They live among these stone walls; on a great plain of stones made with hands. Stone and stone and stone—there is no game to be seen anywhere, and yet they manage to live and find their daily food. Have they then learned of the animals, since they can dig down under the earth like marmots, hang in the air like spiders, fly like the birds and dive under water like the fishes; seemingly masters of all that we struggled against ourselves?

"I see things more than my mind can grasp; and the only way to save oneself from madness is to suppose that we have all died suddenly before we knew, and that this is part of another life."

Perhaps it is fitting that primitive man should teach us this: *nature is great but man is greater still.*

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